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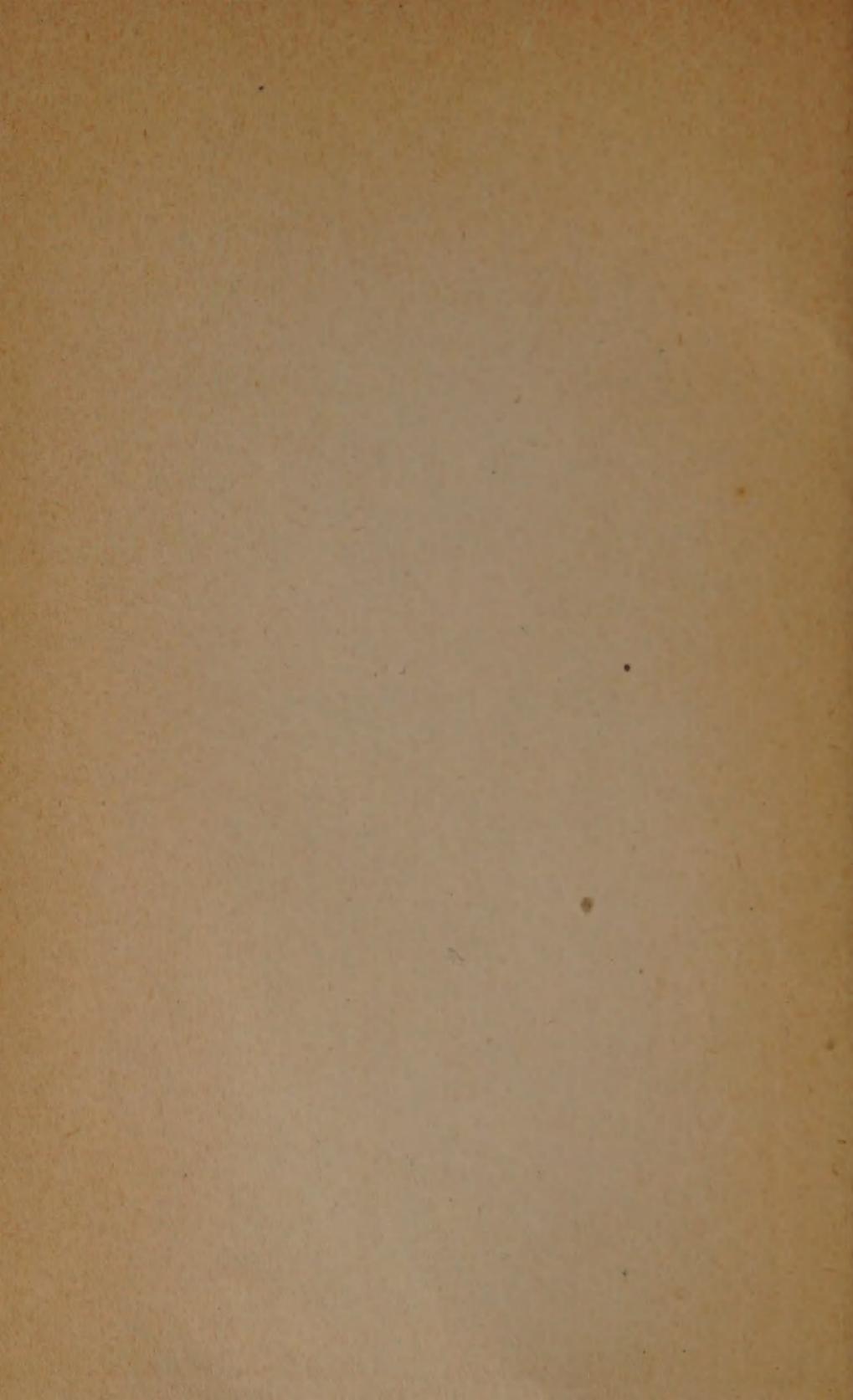
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PRAEPARATIO

H.D.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

PRAEPARATIO

(SUNDAY)

OR

NOTES OF PREPARATION FOR HOLY
COMMUNION

Founded on the Collect, Epistle and Gospel for
Every Sunday in the Year

WITH PREFACE BY THE
REV. GEORGE CONGREVE, S.S.J.E.

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PRAEPARATIO

OR

NOTES OF PREPARATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION

*FOUNDED ON THE COLLECT, EPISTLE AND
GOSPEL FOR EVERY HOLY DAY AND
SAINT'S DAY IN THE YEAR*

WITH PREFACE BY THE

REV. GEORGE CONGREVE, M.A.
OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST, COWLEY

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SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
California

TO
The Memory of
A DEAR AND TRUE FRIEND
CHARLES FRANCIS BARING GREY

MAJOR, LATE R.A.

WHO ENTERED INTO REST AT CANNES

MAY 17, 1903

R.I.P.

He rests ; God's soldier rests ; his body sleeps
In foreign grave, far from the English home ;
His soul, in joyful hope, awaits the day
Of perfecting, in his true native land.
He lived the man's true life, upholding well
His Master's Cross in humble patient faith,
Cheering souls onward, 'midst his weary pain.
Deep in our hearts he lives, and meets us still
In blest Communion with our Risen Lord,
Wherewith sustained, in loneliness and grief,
We wait Christ's call to meet again in Him.

P R E F A C E

HIMSELF unknown, the writer of this Preface commends to all who may read it, a book of preparation for Holy Communion, written by a friend who withholds his name.

It is a volume of meditations for Holy Days, completing the circle of the Ecclesiastical year, which a former volume for the Sundays left incomplete.

The place which the Church of England desires in her devotions for a reverent love of the Saints may be judged by the large space she gives to the Service for Holy Days. Her ideal offers us a celebration of the Holy Mysteries on every Saint's day for which she provides a special Collect, Epistle, and Gospel. By a commemorative Eucharist for the principal Saints, and on one day of the year for All Saints, she is teaching us continually to translate the doctrine of the Communion of Saints into life and practice.

How often we seem to trace our personal failure in devotion and duty to some depressing solitude of heart, some lack of "the comfort of love,"¹—of that Communion of souls like-minded,² which our nature was created for and demands. But the Bible is constantly encouraging us to claim "our inheritance

¹ Phil. ii. 1.

² Phil. ii. 20.

with the Saints in light,"¹ and to enter now into the enjoyment of fellowship with all holy souls that are in Christ. The Communion of Saints in Christ is intended to be a vital element in the Christian's life in this world. Our Lord prays that His Disciples may realise this; "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one."² Jews and Gentiles alike are brought by one Spirit to be "fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the Household of God."³ The Bible represents us as surrounded now by "a great cloud of witnesses,"—the Saints just before enumerated; so that, encouraged by their sympathy,⁴ we may lay aside every hindrance and run our race. Already "We are come (in Christ) to the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, whose names are written in Heaven, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."⁵

There is nothing more characteristic of the Kingdom and work of Christ than this emancipation of the human soul from the solitude of its own individuality. The saved soul is the soul that is saved from itself. A man fallen from God is conscious of something that separates him from everything that he perceives; his personality is a prison from which he knows no escape; whichever way he turns he comes back only to himself and his limitations. Christ the Deliverer opens the prison door, and the soul set free finds itself no longer in a solitude, but in a city; for in the heart of Christ man is welcomed by the love

¹ Col. i. 12.

² St. John xvii. 23.

³ Eph. ii. 19.

⁴ Heb. xii. 1.

⁵ Heb. xii. 23.

and companionship of all the holy souls that are Christ's; he is in the City of God.

Christianity has greatly intensified our need and capacity of human fellowship. It is in the love of Christ, the Son of Man, that the believer first finds perhaps that his need of human sympathy is no negligible quantity, no weak point in his nature. It is through participation in the Humanity of Christ that he finds a new and living way to the Throne of God by the Spirit. The divine fellowship which he finds there is the perfect satisfaction of the human need, but it excludes no other right and generous affection. In whatever degree the Christian realises the divine fellowship, he discovers a new and proportionate sacredness and beauty in *human* fellowship—a new and proportionate need of sharing the happiness which he has in God, with all other creatures of God, and of sharing, by his sympathy, and lifting up to God, all that is theirs of joy and sorrow.

As a result of the Religious movement of the second half of the last century, we have begun to discover how vital and near to ourselves are various social, international, and missionary questions which we used to leave to the care of Providence, as being beyond our proper charge—the charge of saving our own soul. That advance was but one current of a tide, which lifted us out of the narrowness of an individualistic piety into a wider consciousness of solidarity with all souls made in God's image, now living in the world: another was the recovery of the idea of a vital and effectual communion in Christ

between Christians now upon earth and the Saints at rest. The solidarity of the human race, which seemed to the world to be a discovery of its own in the last century, proves to have been always one of the foundations of Christian Theology; and the Catholic Church, taught by the Holy Spirit, has always known the inspiring mystery that the solidarity of redeemed mankind includes all souls who, living in Christ, are withdrawn from the lower world,—all whom we commemorate in our Saints' Day Eucharists, all whom we remember when we pray for the faithful departed.

It is cheering for us, in times of keen historical controversy and questioning of the sacred texts, to contemplate in our prayer that which is not subject to question, the stream of transcendent character, the light of heroic virtue, which runs all through the Christian age—the lives of the Saints. Here we have, transparent to the simple heart, palpitating with the life of Grace and of Nature, the mystery of Christ working in mankind through the centuries, and manifested in human story—a mystery which even the sacred text can only give us through mechanical forms of ever-changing human speech.

Those who use this book of preparation for Communion on Holy Days, will find it a help to grow in the spirit of the English Church, which would train us in a devotion that is no passing thrill of a solitary heart, but the eternal movement of love, the river which makes glad the City of God—the very life of Christ and of all the Saints who are one with Him.

No one will look into a book of meditation for the Saints' Days for any contribution to the controversies of the day, such for instance as the question of invocation of Saints. For prayer belongs to another sphere than controversy, and has a wonderful power of its own to dissolve the difficulties which supply the subjects of controversy—to level mountains and make crooked ways plain. A remarkable instance of this is found in Father Baker's "Sancta Sophia."¹ This great teacher of prayer says: "For the attaining to contemplation, it is not necessary (speaking of precise and absolute necessity) that the acts whereof the exercises consist, should immediately be directed to the pure Divinity (though it cannot be denied that such are the most perfect and most efficacious, because the most introverting; and therefore a soul must give over all other addresses either to the Humanity of Our Lord, or to any Angel or Saint, &c., whosoever she is interiorly moved or enabled to actuate immediately towards God Himself, Who is likewise the end and ultimate object of all other speakings and actuations)."

"The truth is, that whatsoever kind of acts or devotions a soul useth, if they be constantly practised, they will all end in God; so that even the most ignorant among those that God calls to contemplative prayer, though they know no other practice of devotion but the Rosary, and cannot begin their recollections any other way than by turning their thoughts towards the Blessed Virgin, whose protection and

¹ P. 442. Father Baker, O.S.B., 1575-1641.

interception they crave, yet being by that means become profoundly introverted, they quickly leave all direct and express addresses to her, and are led, unawares perhaps to themselves, to the unknown obscure object of the Divinity, in which they plunge and lose themselves; for perfect introversion cannot consist with a continuation of direct and express internal acts made to any creature."

It was said of the late Dr. Westcott that, in relation to all the great controversies, his letters reveal him as holding, not so much a middle position, as one superior to the others, and surveying the questions at issue from higher ground. This position of a higher wisdom, giving at once a more penetrating and a wider view, is the position to which it is the characteristic of prayer to raise the Christian soul; and to seek this higher ground, and breathe this clearer air, will be the best preparation for approaching the Holy Table. This is the very object of these meditations, for meditation is the entrance to the school of prayer.

G. CONGREVE, S.S.J.E.

CAPETOWN, *July 22, 1903.*

INTRODUCTION

WHEN writing the previous Volume of "Præparatio" I had no intention of going beyond the teaching of the Sundays of the Church's year, and therefore, in certain instances, as in the cases of Christmas and Epiphany, interwove the lessons of the Festival with those of the first Sunday after.

In issuing this companion volume I have compiled Notes for all days for which a Collect, Epistle, and Gospel are provided in the Prayer Book, and may have in these special instances, to some extent, repeated what has been already said.

I am aware that these Notes are open to the criticism that they are too full, and contain more than an ordinary digestion can assimilate at one meal.

But I would urge, that I did not contemplate their being used once and once only. I own that a shorter form, directed to one point, and one point only, in the lessons for each week would be more useful to some; but I believed there were other books offering such help already, and my object was rather to provide such Notes as would supply matter for private meditation, not for one year only, but for several.

This of course implies work on the part of the readers, who have to choose their own point out of many, and then to form their own scheme of preparation, varying from time to time. After all is not this the object to be aimed at? Not to provide a set of thoughts which can be read over, and the reading of which can be taken as preparation, but to provide a groundwork of several stones, any one of which can be chosen and hewn by individual effort into the form most suitable. The work, I know well, might have been better done—that which is lacking is consequent upon the want of spiritual discernment in the writer,—but at least what I have stated was, and is, my object and desire.

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Preparation for Communion

The Nativity of our Lord, or the
Birthday of Christ,

COMMONLY CALLED CHRISTMAS DAY.

The Collect.—Almighty God, Who hast given us Thy only-begotten Son to take our nature upon Him, and as at this time to be born of a pure Virgin; Grant that we, being regenerate, and made Thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by Thy Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the same Spirit, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

The Epistle.—Heb. i. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. John i. 1.

The Birthday of Christ, the birthday of joy to the whole world, the birthday of hope, the birthday of light to those who sat in darkness and the shadow of death.

“O that Birth for ever blessed !
When the Virgin, full of grace,
By the Holy Ghost conceiving,
Bare the Saviour of our race,
And the Babe, the world’s Redeemer,
First revealed His Sacred Face,
Evermore and evermore.”

We gather round the Altar of God, that we may keep the Birthday Feast of His Son, the First-begotten of our race. We deck His Cradle-Throne with our offerings of love and devotion. In union with the Child of God, we who "by adoption and grace" are His children too, seek to reflect the Divine Love in offices of love to those who are our brethren.

In love God sends, in love the Holy Child comes, in love He tarries with us. There can be no true preparation, there can be no true keeping of the feast, unless there be in us a corresponding spirit of love, love to God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and love to our brother men.

"Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in Him?"

The note of Christmas is love.

We note specially the doctrinal aspect of the service for the Festival. The fact of the day is not contained in either Epistle or Gospel; both contain the doctrinal answer to the question, "Who is this?"

And that is the question of questions, on the answer to which everything—our faith, our joy, our devotion—depends.

If this be but the birthday of the best, the wisest, the most God-inspired of the human race, of One Who, His birth being like our own, and His death being like our own, was in no respect, except that of personal holiness and wisdom, different to ourselves, then our joy is unreal, for the fabric of our faith rests on no foundation.

Most carefully does the Church in the Service of the day answer the question from the Holy Scriptures in the fullest and completest form.

In the Gospel we are given the testimony of the beloved disciple, the great Apostle of Love—

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.”

In the Epistle the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews depicts the Eternal Sonship of the Redeemer—

“Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express Image of His Person, and upholding all things by the Word of His Power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the Right Hand of the Majesty on high.”

“Being made so much better than the Angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent Name than they.”

That is the foundation of our faith. “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

The Child is God, and God is a Child; “Great is the Lord, and worthy to be praised; little is the Lord, and worthy to be loved.”¹

He “was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.”

And yet, He was born of a human Mother, and entered into a world which He Himself had created, after the law of human birth.

“He was life,” and yet He derives life from that human Mother. “The Life was the light of men,” and yet “the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.”

¹ St. Bernard.

" Of the Father's Love Begotten
Ere the worlds began to be,
He is Alpha and Omega,
He the Source, the Ending He,
Of the things that are, that have been,
And that future years shall see,
Evermore and evermore."

Pray for grace that you may comprehend this great Mystery, that in the Child of Mary you may recognise the Eternal Son of God ; "God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God"; the foundation of your faith, the ground of your hope, the object of your devotion.

No lesser faith can satisfy or avail. If Christ be not the Son of God, the whole scheme of salvation, as the Catholic Church teaches it, is a delusion and a baseless fabric. If Christ be not the Son of Man, our yearnings and desires after holiness must remain unsatisfied, our prospect of victory in the conflict with evil must be esteemed visionary, and our hope of consolation in sorrow, in bereavement, and in death, is but a delusion of our emotions.

Nay. Christ is born, and the darkness flees away. Christ is born, and the dark places of life are illuminated by His Presence. Christ is born, and salvation from sin is offered to those whom He makes His brethren. Christ is born, the King, to Whom all power in heaven and in earth is committed ; and to the King, Who yet is a Child, we commend our souls and lives, assured that as He has the power and the right, so He has the will, to keep that which we have committed unto Him.

We have received preparation and witness. As John the Baptist prepared the way of Christ and bare witness to His Deity, so the Church prepares us by the witness of her Creeds and her teaching for a true faith in the Person of our Lord.

"He was in the world," and the world, though made by Him, "knew Him not." He came even "unto His own," and yet "His own received Him not."

Because He is what He is, therefore the words are still fulfilled in His Sacramental life. He is in the world, day by day, present on the Altars of His Church, and yet the world, dependent as it is upon His sovereignty, knows Him not.

Alas, that we should be compelled to say it, He comes to His own, those who have been made God's children "by adoption and grace," and His own receive Him not.

Contrast the number of the baptized in any parish with the numbers of those who receive their Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

What sadness it brings even across our Christmas joy when we think,

- (i.) Of our own imperfect faith and communions.
- (ii.) Of the number of those who keep the earthly feast, but live in ignorance and neglect of the Heavenly Banquet prepared for them.

How ought we to pray for greater faith and greater illumination, that the Holy Child be not dishonoured and neglected in that world which He came to save.

"As many as received Him, to them gave He power (the right) to become the sons (or children) of God, even to them that believe on His Name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

"Herein is another vast and exceeding high mystery; this Divine Babe is to be an image of ourselves, for we also by this His Birth are to be born again from above into a new and everlasting life, and to be made partakers of His Godhead."¹

¹ Isaac Williams.

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called"—and have the right to call ourselves—"the sons of God."

"And the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth."

"Dwelt," or tabernacled, "among us," or within us. His glory was veiled and shone in the midst of poverty and humility. It is so still. He comes to us in a mystery of lowliness in the elements which rest upon His Altar. He "Whose goings forth have been from everlasting" lies hid in Bethlehem, the House of Bread.

The Incarnate God Who disdained not the Manger at Bethlehem, disdains not the lowly Altar of the lowliest Church, but condescends to meet the children of God, whose nature He has taken, in the humble mystery of the Eucharist, and to make His tabernacle within the souls of His brethren.

"The Word made Flesh," is "full of grace and truth." True, His glory was, and is, veiled; His glory was in His humiliation and suffering, and His glory is in the humility of His Sacramental Presence. But to those whose eyes are opened to know and adore Him, His glory is revealed, the fulness of His grace and truth is manifested, and they worship, saying "Mine eyes have seen the King."

Other Festivals have their own glories of communion, but is there any which surpasses the glory and joy of our Christmas Communion? God's Love manifested in the Babe, His Son; that Son taking our own human nature upon Him; born of a pure Virgin, coming to share life, its joys and sorrows, its happiness and its crosses, with us whom He has made His brethren; that Holy Child coming to us in all the fulness of His grace and truth in the Blessed

Sacrament, and saying "I am thine, and thou art Mine, take Me into the cradle of thine heart that I may abide with thee for ever."

May God give us the grace of a good Communion.

The Epistle, as we have noticed, points to the working out of the progressive purpose of God, and to the Eternal Sonship of the Holy Child—

"God, Who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, Whom He hath appointed Heir of all things, by Whom also He made the worlds."

This corresponds with the teaching of the Gospel—

"All things were made by Him."

"Who being the effulgence of His glory and the very Image of His substance . . . when He had made purification of sins, sat down on the Right Hand of the Majesty on high." (R.V.)

There is no doubt in the Apostle's mind as to the answer to the Christmas question—"Who is this?"

He contrasts the position of the Incarnate Son with that of the Angels—"He hath inherited a more excellent Name than they"—bringing forward for the Hebrews, to whom he is writing, passages from their own Scriptures in proof of His claims.

"Unto which of the Angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee?"

"When He bringeth in the First-begotten into the world He saith, And let all the Angels of God worship Him!"

"Of the Angels He saith, Who maketh His Angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son He saith, Thy Throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy Kingdom."

This—the Apostle seems to say—the Incarnate God, Who now sits on the Right Hand of Power, all things being in subjection under His Feet, is the same Co-Eternal Son, Who was with God, from everlasting before the worlds were made, the Very and Eternal God, Whose years shall not fail, Whose love and mercy shall never change.

It is this Incarnate Son, God of God, Very God of Very God, Who was born unto this world of pain on Christmas Day, and Who comes to us, poor sons of earth and pain and sorrow, in the joy of our Christmas Communion.

With the Collect we have dealt more at length in a previous volume.¹ It deals with the human Sonship of Christ, the Divine sonship of man. God has given His Son to be born of a human Mother, the pure Virgin, that we, being regenerate, may become His sons, by adoption and grace.

As His sons we pray that we may receive the blessing of our incorporation into the Holy Name, and may be partakers of the Divine Spirit, the Holy Ghost,—“may daily be renewed by the Holy Ghost.”

Even as the Holy Child derived His sustenance from His Mother, and thus sustained increased in stature and wisdom, so do we, the babes of Christ, need the daily sustenance of His Holy Spirit, that we may “grow up to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,” in knowledge and in faith, in illumination and ever-increasing devotion.

“Daily be renewed.” We know too well the effect of the daily conflict with evil, the disintegrating, the corrosive power of the world, the flesh, and the devil, upon the fabric of our spiritual life. Daily we seem to lose something, a

¹ “Præparatio” (Sundays).

little fervour, the little advance of yesterday, the little resolution we had the courage to make.

Yes, but "Thou art the same and Thy years shall not fail." The love of the Holy Child in the Holy Eucharist is with us day by day, and day by day He offers His children the Bread of life, and day by day His Spirit waits, and is willing to renew in us that which seems ready to perish and decay.

Christmas comes to us with the most touching invitation of the Love of God which it is possible for us to conceive, for from the Cradle of the Altar the Holy Child stretches out His Arms to us, saying, "Come unto Me that ye may have life."

"O amazing sight that we behold ! Thou Who wast the Word, the only manifestation of God to all created things, Who wast in the beginning, from everlasting, before the worlds were made ; Thou Who wast then, and always hadst been in the Bosom of the Father, in union and love incomprehensible, unspeakable ; and Thou Thyself the only manifestation of the Father, wast God. Thou, the very same Who in the beginning wast with God, One with Him, is it Thee that we now behold, as a helpless Infant before us, as an Infant of a few hours old, stretching forth Thy feeble hands to us, and saying, 'This is Love' ; the great mystery which I have come to teach thee, and which thou canst not understand, is that 'God is Love'?"

"Thou Who madest heavens, and angels, and man also, perfectly good in Thine Own Image, hast Thyself come down to make him anew ; that by beholding Thee, he may learn what humility is, and what love is ; that he may bow his proud head to enter under the lowly roof of this stable, and may stoop down his high look to behold what is in this Manger. O marvellous sight, profound abyss of merciful

lowliness, depth of Divine Love which angels desire to look into, but understand not.”¹

And this mystery of “merciful lowliness,” this humility, this love, is with us in the Sacrament of the Altar. He is there, the Babe of Bethlehem, our Jesus, and our God.

Think what your communion means. You take not, like the holy Simeon, the Divine Child into your arms ; you gaze not and you worship not as did the Shepherds ; to you, as the child of God by adoption and grace, is it granted to receive the Very Body and Blood of the Divine Redeemer, the “Saviour which is Christ the Lord,” to be made one with Him, and He with you.

He desires to rest in your heart as He rested in the arms of His pure Mother. He—if only you will offer Him the cradle of your soul—will deign to find pleasure in your love, and will pour out upon you such treasures of sweetness, of fellowship, and of love, as the mind of man cannot conceive.

In *Preparation*—

“Fear not ; for, behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people.”

In *Communion*—

“Unto you is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”

In *Thanksgiving*—

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom He is well pleased” (R.V.)—or “on earth peace, good pleasure among men.”

“We beheld His glory, full of grace and truth.”

¹ Isaac Williams.

St. Stephen's Day

The Collect.—Grant, O Lord, that, in all our sufferings here upon earth for the testimony of Thy truth, we may steadfastly look up to heaven, and by faith behold the glory that shall be revealed; and, being filled with the Holy Ghost, may learn to love and bless our persecutors, by the example of Thy first Martyr, St. Stephen, who prayed for his murderers to Thee, O Blessed Jesus, Who standest at the Right Hand of God to succour all those that suffer for Thee, our only Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

The Epistle.—Acts vii. 55. *The Gospel.*—St. Matthew xxiii. 34.

So quickly we turn from joy to sorrow; from the Birth of the Child to the suffering of the Martyr.

It is the solemn warning of the Church that “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,” that all who will follow the Holy Child must be prepared to follow Him in all the stages of His life, to Nazareth and to Calvary, through death to life.

The three days following Christmas represent three jewels in the Crown of the King of Saints.

St. Stephen, the Martyr both in will and deed.

St. John, the Martyr in will.

The Holy Innocents, the Martyrs in deed.

It seems so strange to us to find the thoughts of martyr-

dom thus blended with the peaceful thoughts of the Nativity and Bethlehem.

“On earth peace,” and we find a sword. Why is it?

It is the Lamb of God upon Whom we look, loving Him with an intensity of devotion just because we know He has come to suffer and to die, to give His life a ransom for many.

We could hardly bear to look upon a child sleeping on his mother’s knee, if we knew all that he had to pass through before his life shall close, the manner of his life, and the fashion of his death.

But, of this Child, we know all that is to be; how He shall live, how He shall suffer, in what agony He shall die.

And we know not merely the outward aspect of His life, but we know the purpose and the principle.

“Lo, I come to do Thy Will, O God.”

“By the which Will we are sanctified through the offering of the Body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

He came to be offered, He came to offer Himself, in all things to do the Will of His Father in Heaven.

Can we wonder then that they are nearest to Him, who loving Him beyond all things have entered closest into the spirit of His Life, following Him in the sacrifice of will, of all that life holds dear, even of life itself?

“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown (*στέφανον*) of life.”

The Epistle contains the account of the martyrdom of St. Stephen. We must recall who he was; what his position in the Church.

Not an Apostle, only one of the seven deacons, appointed by the laying on of the Apostles’ hands to the work of “serving tables,” described as “a man full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost,” “full of faith and power.”

Arraigned before the Council, they "saw his face as it had been the face of an Angel," while boldly and with appeal to the Scriptures he made his defence.

Upbraided with their hardness of heart and resistance to the Holy Ghost, his hearers "were cut to the heart, and gnashed on him with their teeth."

"But he"—how grand is the picture of the Martyr standing alone in the presence of their wrath—"being full of the Holy Ghost"—always the same description—"looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the Glory of God, and Jesus standing on the Right Hand of God."

Mark the position, "standing," though elsewhere we read of His "sitting"—"sat down on the Right Hand of God."

Surely the change is not without significance. In the Martyr's hour of need, the King in Royal sympathy rises from His Throne, stands ready to help and welcome His servant faithful unto death.

"Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the Right Hand of God."

It is the first time the expression "the Son of Man" has been used by man of the Incarnate Son of God. It had been used by Christ in speaking of Himself, but hitherto not applied to Him by another.

It is the first recorded instance also of prayer addressed to the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. In this connection it may be noted that the Collect for the Day is also so addressed, following the example of the Proto-Martyr.

But Stephen was, in speaking, "full of the Holy Ghost," and the expression may have been prompted by his consciousness of his Master's Human fellowship and sympathy with him in his hour of suffering.

“And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’”

Full of the Holy Ghost and of faith, in calling upon God, he calls upon Jesus, and in calling upon Jesus, he calls Him “Lord.”

All fear is taken away because he knows Him in Whom he has believed ; he knows Him to be Lord and King, in this world, and in the world beyond to which he is going.

How soon the words and spirit of the Master find echo in the first Martyr of the Church.

“Father, into Thy Hands I commend my spirit.”

“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”

“Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do.”

“Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.”

What a marvellous change in the history of death and forgiveness of injuries has been wrought by the Son of God.

“And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”

Death had become to him a falling asleep on the Bosom of His Master in perfect faith and perfect confidence. “Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Life.” With Christ in death, death has lost its terrors. “O Death, where is thy sting ?”

The prayer in the Collect is that we may have grace to follow Christ’s blessed Martyr,

- (i.) in faith and realization of the unseen ; “steadfastly look up to Heaven, and by faith behold the glory that shall be revealed ;”
- (ii.) in forgiveness of injuries, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Note the stress placed upon "filled with the Holy Ghost," the characteristic of St. Stephen. We must be empty of self before we can be filled with the Spirit.

"Our sufferings here upon earth"; not the ordinary pains and sorrows of human life, and not the sufferings which we may have brought upon ourselves, but the sufferings consequent upon a faithful witness to the truth. "All those that suffer *for Thee*" is the last clause.

What do I know of suffering for the truth, of suffering for the cause of Jesus my Lord? Have I yet "resisted unto blood, striving against sin"?

The Gospel contains our Master's preparation of His Apostles and of all who should come after them, for that suffering which must be the portion of the followers of the Lamb.

"Some of them ye shall kill and crucify; some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city."

And even as He foretells the suffering which for His Name's sake must be experienced at the hands of those who know not, or who resist the truth, His Heart yearns over the persecutors, on whom He is compelled to pass judgment.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

"Behold your house is left unto you desolate."

Who would not be content to suffer for such a Master, Whose Heart was thus yearning for the salvation of those so soon to become His murderers?

How great was the triumph of grace in St. Stephen, who, following in that Master's steps, and drinking that cup of suffering in union with Him, could "pray for his murderers to Thee, O Blessed Jesus."

Under which category do I come? Among those who are willing to suffer for the truth's sake, and for Jesus our Lord, or among those of whom Christ said, "How often would I have gathered thy children together . . . *and ye would not*?"

Still the Heart of Jesus yearns for His people's repentance; still He waits to be gracious; even now in the Blessed Sacrament His Voice may be heard, "How often," "and ye would not!"

There we find the fullest witness to His Love. He calls His people to follow Him in the sacrifice of their wills, their thoughts, their lives, to that which oftentimes seems a martyrdom to human nature.

True, but in order that they may be able to sacrifice themselves He calls them to His Own most gracious Sacrifice. There He shows them the Perfect Example, shows them how to offer, and uniting the weakness of their sacrifice with the perfection of His Own, enables them to present "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God."

But we need—how often we forget it—to be "filled with the Holy Ghost." "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, long-suffering, gentleness . . . faith."

Two of the things which the example of St. Stephen tells us we so greatly need—faith, and long-suffering gentleness.

Loving Him Who loved us and gave Himself in sacrifice for us, we shall be always "stedfastly looking up to Heaven," where He stands at the Right Hand of God to succour those who follow Him in sacrifice.

Through faith, the fruit of the Spirit, we shall "behold the glory that shall be revealed."

Think of the contrast of a Eucharist with faith, and a Eucharist without faith. By faith, we "discern the Lord's Body"; Jesus, in His Majesty, His sympathy, His love, His power, is revealed to us, and henceforth we "see no man, save Jesus only."

No sacrifice is too great, no suffering too severe, if only we have seen His Face, and, though now "through a glass darkly," beheld His Glory.

A Eucharist without faith—where I see only myself, and things earthly, things visible, with no consciousness of Thy Presence, or of Thy Glory—from such darkness and blindness, and from all that causes them, dear Lord, of Thy mercy, deliver me.

In Preparation—

Examine self—

- (i.) As to your willingness to sacrifice your will, your time, your desires for the sake of Christ and His truth.
- (ii.) As to your resistance to His appeal for a more perfect sacrifice—"How often," "and ye would not."

In Communion—

"O most Blessed Light Divine,
Shine within these hearts of Thine,
And our inmost being fill;"

That we, by faith, may "see Jesus," and behold the glory of His Presence, and the radiance of His Love.

H.D.

B

In *Thanksgiving*—

Having received so precious gifts and such wondrous vision, pray for—

- (i.) The grace of stedfastness in faith and devotion.
- (ii.) The spirit of charity and forgiveness of injuries.

St. John the Evangelist's Day

The Collect.—Merciful Lord, we beseech Thee to cast Thy bright beams of light upon Thy Church, that it, being enlightened by the doctrine of Thy blessed Apostle and Evangelist Saint John, may so walk in the light of Thy truth, that it may at length attain to the light of everlasting life ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—i St. John i. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. John xxi. 19.

St. John, the Apostle of Love, the disciple whom Jesus loved, the one who, in the strength of love and of faith, had to tarry long before he was called to the Presence of Him Whom he loved, and to Whom he bore witness, he it is whose festival we keep to-day.

Fitly does he stand close to the Manger Throne of the Holy Child, for love is the keynote of Bethlehem, and none entered more deeply into the Spirit of His Master than the Martyr in will, St. John.

Through love he followed, by love was he privileged to receive peculiar manifestations of His Master's power and glory and sacrifice ; by love was he constrained to stand by the Cross, and from love did he receive a sacred charge ; with the insight of faith and love he has recorded, for our instruction, the wonders of the Incarnate Life.

He shines, as a bright and resplendent jewel in the Crown

of the King of Saints, and his light, the light derived from the Sun of Righteousness, is for our illumination.

“When He that enlighteneth every man came into the world, He cast some of the bright beams of His Light upon St. John, that by Him the illumination of the world might be more perfect.”¹

“Bright beams of light,” “enlightened by his doctrine ;” “the light of Thy truth ;” “the light of everlasting life.” Notice how often the word occurs in the Collect.

The Church derives its light from Christ, its Head. *He*, St. John tells us, “was the True Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”

From the writings of St. John the Church receives enlightenment in the mysteries of the faith, especially in the mystery of the Incarnation and of the Being of Jesus Christ.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

“The Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that Eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.”

St. John is known to the affection of the Church as the Apostle of Love, to her intellect as “the Divine.”

We owe to him not only his record in his Gospel, but the doctrinal teaching of his Epistles, and the revelation of things which shall be in the Apocalypse.

“I am He that liveth, and was dead ; and, behold, I am alive for evermore ; and have the keys of hell and of death.”

Consider the light shed by such a revelation upon death and upon the world beyond ; the light which has shone in many a soul, in the presence of death, and brought comfort

¹ Blunt’s “Annotated Book of Common Prayer.”

to those who have seen their loved ones departing into the world unseen.

The enlightened Church is so to walk in the light of God's truth now, that it may at length, when its work and its trial time are over, "attain to the light of everlasting life."

"To walk in the light," must mean to continue steadfastly to advance in the path of sound doctrine, to live in the Presence of the Light, which is Jesus Christ our Lord.

"The Lord shall be to thee an everlasting Light."

"I am the Light of the world : he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

"Now are ye light in the Lord : walk as children of light."

"Ye are a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people ; that ye should show forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light."

And the culmination is to be the attaining to "the light of everlasting life," of which St. John in the Apocalypse tells us.

"The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it ; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof."

"And there shall be no night there ; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun ; for the Lord God giveth them light ; and they shall reign for ever and ever."

Pray so to walk in the light of Divine truth now, that you may be able to bear the light of the unveiled Presence of Jesus hereafter.

The Epistle bears out what we have said. Its teaching is founded on doctrinal statement and contains the witness of the Apostle to the truths of the Incarnation.

“The Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.”

“This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, That God is Light and in Him is no darkness at all.”

Note the connection between the Epistle and the words of the Collect.

The Church unites men in fellowship with God ; “truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

He being Light and there being in Him no darkness, those who are in Him must, in proof of their fellowship, walk in the light ; if they walk in darkness it is proof that no real fellowship exists.

If we walk in the light we have, through our fellowship with Him, fellowship one with another, “and the Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

Sin is clearly the cause of darkness ; it is the force which separates us from God, the true Light.

We are partakers in sin ; “if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us ;” we are not walking in the light of the truth.

But even sin can be forgiven, its stain removed, and its darkness changed to light, if we are willing to submit to the conditions which the love of God has laid down.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

“The Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

The condition for the application of the Precious Blood is our confession of sin.

Sin, with us as members of Christ’s Church, is committed

against the grace of the Sacraments. By Baptism we were admitted into the Kingdom of light and received grace to walk in the light. In Confirmation grace was renewed to us to enable us to continue in the light.

If we sin against Sacramental grace, and if it has been revealed to us that the Precious Blood alone can remove the sin, and heal our uncleanness, we shall seek for a Sacrament by which the powers of that Precious Blood may be specially conveyed to our souls.

We find it in the Sacrament of Penance, the means of restoration for those who, admitted into the divine fellowship by a Sacrament, have sinned against the sacramental grace received.

“Our Lord Jesus Christ hath left power to His Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in Him.”

Sinners are absolved through the power of the Precious Blood, and delivered from the darkness and bondage of sin are thereby enabled to walk in the light of truth.

Consider what we owe to the teaching of St. John the Divine as contained in this one portion of his writings, the Epistle for his festival, upon sin, the possibility of forgiveness, and the marvellous Love of God in the Precious Blood.

The Holy Gospel takes us into the innermost personal life of St. John, and reveals to us the fellowship into which he was admitted, the tie which bound him to His Lord, and the discipline which Love provides for its loved ones.

“Peter seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on His breast at supper.”

The whole revelation of St. John’s life is in the words

The light had shined upon him, "we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father."

"His Glory," *i.e.* Majesty, Divinity, all the attributes of God, especially power and mercy.

Loving Jesus, and loved by Him, the disciple followed, walking in the light, and following Him in closest union,— "leaning on His breast at supper."

Think of the revelations from the Divine Light which must then have illumined the soul of the Apostle, of the mystery of that fellowship of love into which he was allowed to enter.

And think of the possibilities which are opened to us as we prepare to receive that Blessed Sacrament which at that Supper Jesus ordained for all His people, that Sacrament through which we have fellowship with Him and fellowship one with another.

Who is it Who is present with us there? It is the Only-Begotten Son, He Who was from all eternity with the Father, Who is "God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, Begotten, not made, being of One substance with the Father."

It is He, "the Beginning and the End, Which is, and Which was, and Which is to come, the Almighty," Who bids us approach His Altar Throne.

In the condescension of His Love He calls us to sit down at meat with Him, that He may admit us into communion with Himself, that He may irradiate our souls with the Light of His Presence, that He may communicate to us from His own Life fresh and fresh supplies of grace and power.

Consider the intensity of the responsibility of our Communions. The life must be consistent with the privilege. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk

in darkness"—the darkness of self-will and of sin, of a life separate from Him—"we lie and do not the truth."

Consider the spirit in which we must live and make our Communions—the spirit of patient, faithful love.

Christ does not always and at once, give such illumination, such manifestations of His Presence as we crave for and think we deserve. "If I will that he tarry till I come."

It is enough for us to follow, to lean on His breast, to wait, to watch, to love and pray. In His own good time, when our discipline has been perfected, He will reveal to us the fulness of His Light. "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."

In Preparation—

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

"The Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

"Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law."

In Communion—

"Behold the Lamb of God, Which taketh away the sins of the world."

"And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

In Thanksgiving—

"I will sing of the Lord, because He hath dealt so lovingly with me: yea, I will praise the Name of the Lord most Highest."

"Though the vision tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come."

The Innocents' Day

The Collect.—O Almighty God, Who out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast ordained strength, and madest infants to glorify Thee by their deaths; Mortify and kill all vices in us, and so strengthen us by Thy grace, that by the innocence of our lives, and constancy of our faith, even unto death, we may glorify Thy Holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Rev. xiv. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. ii. 13.

As St. Stephen was a martyr in will and deed, and St. John a martyr in will, so the Holy Innocents were martyrs in deed, giving their pure lives for the Holy Child Jesus.

“Stephen,” says St. Bernard, “was a martyr among men; John may be considered so in the sight of Angels, to whom by spiritual signs his devotion was known: but these are martyrs with God; for neither to men nor angels is their merit known, but commended to God alone in the prerogative of His singular grace.”

With them the offering was involuntary, and yet, inasmuch as it was an offering whereby the life of the children’s King was sheltered and preserved, they are said to have “glorified” God “by their deaths.”

“An age,” says St. Cyprian, “not yet capable of conflict, proved fit for a crown.” “Not in speaking but in dying,” says the Collect used until 1661, “have they confessed Christ.”

They stand to us as the picture of child-life, pure and innocent, unspotted by contact with the world—"in their mouth was found no guile," transplanted, through the law of vicarious suffering, to the Paradise of God, there to grow up, under the light of the Sun of Righteousness, "unto a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

They suffered for Christ, they partook, albeit unconsciously, of His sufferings, they followed Him in the way of innocence here; now they "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth."

Their record on earth is contained in the Holy Gospel; their record in the present, the sequel to the event narrated in the Gospel, is to be found in the Epistle—"They are without fault before the Throne of God." We take the Gospel first.

The Gospel narrates the events which led to the martyrdom of the Holy Innocents. Warned by the Angel of the Lord, St. Joseph took "the Young Child and His Mother" and fled into Egypt, there to tarry until the death of Herod. "For Herod will seek the Young Child to destroy Him."

Consider—

- (i.) The unseen care of the Heavenly Father—
 - (a) For "the Young Child," His Only-Begotten Son;
 - (b) For all His children whom that Divine Son came to redeem.

How little we know of the mysteries of that unseen kingdom in which we live; of the Divine interposition for our preservation from, to us, unknown evils; of the hidden powers by which we are both preserved and assaulted.

Consider again—

- (ii.) The sanctity of all child-life, because of the Incarnation whereby the Son of God became “the Young Child.”
- (iii.) The dangers to which child-life, even in its purity and innocence, is exposed.
- (iv.) The machinations of the Prince of this world against the spiritual life of the members of the Holy Child. “Herod will seek the Young Child to destroy Him.” Satan seeks ever to destroy the tender springing up of the spiritual life within the soul, as well as to destroy and corrupt the purity and innocence of child-life.¹

But “your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need” : His providential care never slackens ; the angelic powers are ever ready to obey His commands on our behalf. The danger is lest we forget.

God often places His children in strange places ; they are to be found “in Egypt,” where we least expect them to be, but it is for the fulfilment of His divine purposes concerning them ; and when the time has come, then “Out of Egypt have I called My Son.”

“Woe is me, that I am constrained to dwell in Mesech : and to have my habitation among the tents of Kedar.” And yet the Divine sonship may be maintained. It is for the sons of God to be ready for His call.

“Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the Wise Men, was exceeding wroth ; and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under.”

“In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.”

¹ See “The Ministry of Angels,” chap. iv.

In how many a home have the words been fulfilled! Mothers weeping for their children, dearly loved, and early called away by the inscrutable Providence of God.

The Christian mother alone can find comfort. "They are not," and yet "they are." "They are without fault before the Throne of God," stored up in His treasure house, waiting for the day of eternal meeting.

"It is certain by God's Word," says the Service for Baptism, "that children which are baptized, dying before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved."

Called to His Presence in the unsullied purity and innocence of infancy, they must be very near to the Heart of the children's Friend, of Him who was His Mother's Spotless Child. Very dear must they be to the Blessed Mother of God's dear Son.

Shall we, who know full well what are the sorrows and the sins, the stains, and the pollutions of this evil world, grudge them to Him Who says: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me," or grudge them the blessedness of unsullied purity, ignorance of life's sorrows, unclouded union with the Lord?

The Epistle lifts us up from the sorrows and separations of a sin-stained earth to the joys and union of the Heavenly Kingdom, to the joy, especially, which is the portion of the pure and innocent, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

"I looked, and lo a Lamb"—the Lamb without blemish and without spot—stood on the Mount Sion, "and with Him an hundred and forty four thousand, having His Father's Name written in their foreheads."

And there they sing the new song of the redeemed, a

song which none can learn but those “which are redeemed from the earth.”

These are they, which in spite of earth’s temptations, have kept themselves pure; followers of the Spotless Lamb on earth, now “they follow Him whithersoever He goeth,” “redeemed from among men, being first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb.”

It is a vision which fills us with penitence and with longing. With penitence for lost purity and innocence of soul; with longing to be admitted to the number of the redeemed, to be allowed to learn the new song.

Can we hope to regain that which is lost, to be able to join, although with weakened voice, in the song of the hundred and forty-four thousand?

See what the Collect bids us pray—

- (i.) “Mortify and kill all vices in us.”
- (ii.) “Strengthen us by Thy grace” that we may,
—what? Enter into Thy glory? Sing the
new song? No, that is not the prayer.

“That by the innocency of our lives, and constancy of our faith, even unto death, we may glorify Thy Holy Name.”

That is the prayer—to “glorify God’s Holy Name”; to live for Him and to trust Him, to be faithful in spite of suffering and trial; to suffer for Him, if need be, and by our constancy and life’s witness to glorify Him; that is enough—we can leave all results, all the future to Him.

It was the record of the Only-Begotten Son, “I have glorified Thee on the earth,” and “God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every Name.” If we follow the example we may hope to attain to the glory.

God does not leave His children to stand or to fight alone; He co-operates with them in their efforts after holiness.

It is true we must mortify the flesh, and bring it into subjection, and yet we may pray, "Mortify and kill all vices in us."

Alone we cannot hope to overcome, because the flesh is so powerful, and the hosts of evil are leagued against us. But, "strengthen us by Thy grace"; "Give constancy," we say, "to our weak faith and faltering efforts. We want to glorify Thee, and knowing the infirmity of our nature we cling to Thee. For Thou only art Holy; Thou only art the Lord."

We come, on these days after Christmas, to the Manger Throne, and there in the radiancy of His purity and spotless innocence we behold, by faith, the Holy Child Jesus.

The dazzling brightness of His pure Presence convicts and convinces us of sin. We hardly dare to gaze, because so conscious of what we have lost, and of what we are.

We strive to see, but our vision has become weakened and dimmed by the impurities of this world. We want to hear the whispers of the Holy Child, but our ears have grown dull. We can only cry, "Unclean, unclean."

Can we be restored, can our souls be cleansed from the contamination which daily conflict with the world, and the daily uprisings of sin within ourselves, entail? Can we ever be made strong to resist the forces of evil which from within and without beset us?

Listen! "The Blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin."

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

With cleansing comes strength, for the cause of weakness is removed. Jesus waits in His Church, to cleanse and to strengthen, if only we are willing to accept His conditions.

But sin dies hard. It is not one confession, it is not a solitary Communion at Christmas which will "mortify and kill" the besetting vice.

Sin tempts daily, and daily Satan seeks to regain his power. The effort of resistance must be daily, and thanks be to God, Jesus is present with us daily in the Eucharist; in the light of His Presence sin withers, and from the consciousness of His Presence, strength comes to the fainting soul.

We draw near to Him in the humility of our penitence, and He welcomes our approach. It is to humility, "to the similitude of little children," says St. Bernard, "that you, most beloved, are invited by the Mystery of this day's Festival."

In Preparation—

"He comes to take possession of thy heart, and to mould it anew; to shed the dew of renovating grace on thy once regenerate soul; to change thee into the likeness of the Infant of Bethlehem."

Prepare to meet Him.

In Communion—

He says to thee, "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in Heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

In *Thanksgiving*—

“A little Child shall lead them.”

“Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest.”

“Thou canst not follow Me now,” Thou sayest. Grant me Thy grace, dear Lord, that in daily mortification and in constancy of faith, I may so strive to glorify Thee, that I may one day be found worthy to follow Thee, and to be reckoned among the number of Thy redeemed.

The Circumcision of Christ

The Collect.—Almighty God, Who madest Thy blessed Son to be circumcised, and obedient to the law for man ; Grant us the true circumcision of the Spirit ; that our hearts, and all our members, being mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, we may in all things obey Thy blessed will ; through the same Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Rom. iv. 8. *The Gospel.*—St. Luke ii. 15.

There seems a certain sequence between the festival of to-day and those of the Christmas Octave, St. Stephen, St. John, and the Holy Innocents.

In each of those commemorated was manifested the law of sacrifice ; each trod the way of suffering ; all offered their lives for their Master ; St. John in will, St. Stephen and the Holy Innocents in deed.

To-day seems to answer the question, Why are they placed by the Church so near to the Manger Throne of the Son of God ?

Because in them is manifested so clearly the Spirit of the Lamb of God, the Spirit of Sacrifice ; because they were so truly followers of the Lamb.

For before He called on them to suffer, He Himself had suffered in the Flesh ; before even the Holy Innocents had suffered for His Sake, He Himself had, on the very thres-

hold of life, experienced human suffering, and tasted the Cup of pain in the shedding of His Precious Blood.

Before He asked of them to glorify His Father by obedience to the Law of Sacrifice, He Himself had been made "obedient to the law for man."

It is one of the marvels, as it is one of the priceless treasures, of our membership in Christ, that He never asks of us anything which He Himself has not first accomplished; that He never asks us to take one step, but we can find the trace of His Own Sacred Footstep, and that Footstep stained with His Precious Blood.

The Gospel goes back to the story of the Nativity and of the visit of the Shepherds to the Holy Child. "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us. And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger."

The spirit of the Shepherds must be our spirit throughout the Christmas season. "Let us now go even to the Altar of God, even unto the God of our joy and gladness, that we see this thing which hath come to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us."

There, in the Eucharist, we find the Holy Babe; worshiping there, we hear and join in the Angels' songs, for "the Lord hath made known to us" the coming of His Son, the Presence of the Holy Child Jesus.

Such knowledge once gained must be made known to others. If Jesus is to us life, salvation, joy, and peace, we must bring others to participate in the blessings which we ourselves have received. "They made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this Child."

"All that heard it wondered," but wonder may lead to inquiry, and inquiry may lead to knowledge, and knowledge

to true faith. Let us be sure, in these days of unbelief, that we have knowledge wherewith to answer inquiry, and a faith which by consistency of life, and consistency of devotion, bears witness to the truth of the Incarnation.

“But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.”

She, the Blessed Mother, was at once the pattern and the example of meditation. In the midst of her cares as Mother, she could yet find time for spiritual contemplation, pondering in her heart the Mysteries of the Incarnate Life, and of her own relation to the Divine Will.

“Christmas brings so many cares and engagements I have no time for worship or for private devotion.” And the season with all its marvels and the appeal of the Holy Child to find a dwelling-place in our hearts passes, and we wonder that we remain worldly and unmoved.

Strive for better things. The seasons and the years pass so quickly, and the verities of the faith cannot become the principles of our lives unless we snatch the time to ponder them in our hearts. “The fashion of this world passeth away,” but “Thy Name, O Lord, endureth for ever.”

“The Shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen.” Well would it be if we went forth from the Christmas week, from the year just closing, in a like spirit, glorifying God for all that we have heard and seen.

We stand on the threshold of a New Year, and the Child Jesus leads us from the Old into the New. His is the Form upon which our eyes rest as we look forward and backward.

(i.) Who is He?

Do not be content with anything but the words of the Creeds.

“I believe . . . in Jesus Christ, His Only Son

our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary."

"God of God, Very God of Very God, Begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father ; Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, And was Incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made Man."

"God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds : and Man, of the Substance of His Mother, born in the world."

(ii.) What has He done for us ?

"Who for us men and *for our salvation* came down from heaven."

Through Him we have been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the Kingdom of light, the Kingdom of God's dear Son, " In Whom we have redemption through His Blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

Go through in memory the revelations of God's mercy and grace to you during the past year. The tale of Sacraments of which, through the forbearance of God, you have been the recipient. Each Sacrament has been a visitation to you of the Holy Child Jesus.

He has walked with you, and spoken to you, pleaded with you, upheld you, admitted you to the closest intimacy of union with Himself, through participation of His Precious Body and Blood.

He goes with you into the New Year, and leads you—in the way of life's journey, do you say? Yes, but leads you specially in the true way, which is the way of the Cross, in the way of obedience which is the way of fellowship with Himself.

Take the closing words of the Gospel—"When eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the Child."

"For love of us His woes begin,
The Sinless suffers for our sin ;
The Law's great Maker for our aid
Obedient to the Law is made."

Wherever He leads us in the coming year we can have the assurance of His Presence with us.

"My Presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

If joy comes to us, He will share it with us : if sorrow, we shall have the companionship of Him Who is "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He is bound to us by community of nature, by the capacity of enduring suffering, and the experience of pain. Our sufferings, troubles, and distress bind us close to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Holy Child.

We enter the year with the prayer of the Collect upon our lips.

"Almighty God, Who madest Thy Blessed Son to be circumcised, and obedient to the law for man."

"Lo I come to do Thy Will, O God." We keep the Father's Will and the Blessed Son's willingness before our minds, seeking to conform our lives thereto in the spirit of the prayer which the Son has taught us—

"Our Father which art in heaven,
Thy Kingdom come,
Thy Will be done."

That is our attitude as we begin the year. But, though the spirit be willing, the flesh is weak, and we are conscious that we take with us the frailties of which we have had experience in the past, and to the increase of which we have ourselves conducted.

"Grant us," therefore, we say, as we face the new stretch

of time on which we are entering, “the true circumcision of the spirit; that our hearts and all our members being mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, we may in all things obey Thy Holy Will.”

Mark the clauses—

- (i.) The true circumcision of the spirit.

The spirit must be cleansed if the outward life is to be pure and true.

“Their inward part is very wickedness,”—that is the state of the “uncircumcised in heart and mind.”

Contrast it with “I delight in the law of God after the inward man.”

- (ii.) Mortification of the flesh.

It is no good to use the words of the Collect unless we are prepared to submit to mortification of our desires and of our bodies.

- “This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.”
- “I keep under my body and bring it into subjection.”
- “I die daily.”

- (iii.) Through spiritual and bodily discipline we must seek to attain to an increasing obedience to God’s blessed Will; increasing because our ultimate desire is “in all things,” after the pattern of the Holy Child, to make that Will the principle of our lives.

How much we have got to do! How little we have attained hitherto! Of Thy mercy give us grace in this coming year to render to Thee a more perfect obedience.

How greatly we need the faith of our father Abraham, faith to accept the promises of God, faith to see the Love of our Father, the Presence of His Holy Child, to realise the desire and the endeavour of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost for our progress and sanctification.

"Draw near with faith and take this Holy Sacrament to your comfort." Begin the year with Jesus; resolve to spend the year with Jesus, so that if this year be thy last on earth, thou mayest "be found in Him, not having thine own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

He comes to thee knowing what is in store for thee: thou canst not see nor know, but He sees and knows all, and is ordering thy life for thy salvation if only thou art willing to accept His ruling.

He comes to thee in the Holy Sacrament "for thy great comfort"; to strengthen thee in sacrifice, to uphold thee in suffering, to support thee as thou dost endeavour to follow Him in the way of the Cross.

Offer to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament—

(i.) Thy will—"Lord, I will follow Thee."

(ii.) Thy mortification of spirit and of body. "Here we offer and present unto Thee ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Thee."

(iii.) The ascription of thy praise, thy devotion, and thy love.

"We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we give thanks to Thee."

Say the "Our Father;"
the "Anima Christi."

The Epiphany

The Collect.—O God, Who by the leading of a star didst manifest Thy only-begotten Son to the Gentiles ; Mercifully grant that we, which know Thee now by faith, may after this life have the fruition of Thy glorious Godhead ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Eph. iii. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. ii. 1.

“ In its earliest origin, the Epiphany was observed as a phase of Christmas in the same way as the Circumcision is now to be so regarded. The idea in which the whole cycle of the Festivals of our Lord is founded is that of memorialising before God the successive leading points of our Lord’s life and acts.”

Originally the Epiphany was regarded as that part of the Christmas Festival on which was commemorated the Baptism of our Lord. “ By Thy Holy Nativity and Circumcision ; By Thy Baptism ” is the order in the Litany.

The primitive name of the day was “ Theophania ”—the Manifestation of God, a name which is still retained in the Eastern Church, which also maintains the use of the record of our Lord’s Baptism (St. Matt. iii. 13 to 17) as the Gospel for the day.

Gradually the Festival seems to have acquired a more independent position, and to have become associated with the Manifestation of our Lord to the Magi, about the fourth century, and in the Western Church.

But the original idea has never been entirely superseded, as we find when we look at the special lessons for the day at Matins and Evensong. The account of the Baptism is read at Matins—the Manifestation of the Divine Sonship by the Voice from Heaven, and the visible descent of the Holy Ghost: the Manifestation of our Lord's Divine power, by turning water into wine at the marriage feast at Cana, is illustrated by the Second Lesson at Evensong.

The Sundays in the Epiphany season each contain a special Manifestation of the Divinity of our Lord. “When we are entering with Him on the course of His earthly humiliation, it is fitting that we should make such a recognition of His Divinity: as the Transfiguration trained the three chosen Apostles for the sight of the Agony and Crucifixion, so the Epiphany will set the Church forward in a true spirit towards the observance of Lent and Good Friday.”¹

In the Prayer Book reference is only made at the Holy Eucharist to “the Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles”; the Gospel containing the narrative of the visit of the Wise Men; the Collect referring to the same event; and the Epistle to the inclusion of the Gentiles in the Kingdom of Christ.

There is something so majestic in the simplicity of the Gospel narrative: “When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa, in the days of Herod the King, behold, there came Wise Men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His Star in the East, and are come to worship Him.’”

The visit of the Magi probably followed the Presentation

¹ See Blunt's “Annotated Prayer Book.”

of Christ in the Temple, after which St. Luke tells us the Holy Family "returned into Galilee to their own city Nazareth." From Nazareth they returned to Bethlehem, probably on the occasion of one of the great annual Feasts at Jerusalem. The statement of St. Luke (ii. 39), who omits reference to the visit of the Magi and the Flight into Egypt, is not contradictory, but supplemental, to that of St. Matthew.

Note the purpose and the providence of God.

The Kingdom of Christ is to be an universal kingdom : "according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." The distinction between Jew and Gentile is, in Christ, to be done away. Christ is manifested, first, in the Temple to His chosen people, then, through the calling of God Himself by the Star, to the Gentiles as personified by the Wise Men.

"This Star," says St. Jerome, "arose in the East according to the prophecy of Balaam (Num. xxiv. 17), whose successors the Magi were, and it was ordained to be a rebuke to the Jews that they might learn Christ's Nativity from the Gentiles."

Picture to yourself the faith, the patience of the Wise Men in undertaking, and accomplishing through long travel and weariness, their search for "the King of the Jews." Note too the object of their journey, "We are come to worship Him."

They go first to the earthly ruler, who is "troubled" by their question, fearing that he, an usurper, should be dispossessed by the rightful King.

He sends for the Chief Priests and the Scribes, those learned in the Hebrew Scriptures, to demand of them where the Christ should be born.

They knew the Scriptures and yet knew not Christ : they

could point others to His Birthplace, but would not find Him for themselves.

He, the Christ, is to be found in Bethlehem, “the house of bread”—the Living Bread that came down from heaven.

The prophet Micah speaks of Bethlehem as “little among the thousands of Judah,” a place of humility, and yet he was inspired to predict its future glory: “Yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be Ruler in Israel; Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting (from the days of eternity).”

Listen to the words of Herod, spoken in subtlety, but yet so full of teaching to us. “Go, and search diligently for the Young Child, and when ye have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also.”

“Go and search diligently for the Young Child.” Compare our sloth in seeking the Holy Child in the Holy Eucharist. If we have found Him there, manifesting to us the glory of His Presence and the wonders of His Love, we cannot be content until we have brought others to “come and worship Him also.”

God, Who had led the Wise Men through their long journey, brings them to the Object of their desire. “Lo, the Star, which they saw in the East, went before them, till it came and stood over where the Young Child was.”

God Who has “begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

He never forsakes or forgets those who follow the Divine guidance. When least expected His Light is manifested, revealing to us the road which leads to the Presence of His Son. That Presence is the joy and comfort of our life now; it is to be the reward of His people throughout eternity—“they shall see His Face.”

The vision of Bethlehem—“they saw the Young Child

with Mary His Mother." It is the fruition of their hope and faith. The effect of the vision—"they fell down and worshipped Him : and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh."

"To Him shall be given of the gold of Arabia : Prayer (typified by the frankincense) shall be made daily unto Him." Myrrh—"they did it for His burial."

"Auro Regem, thure Deum, myrrha mortalem prædicant."
"Thus their act was like a Creed."

"Mine eyes have seen the King," might they well say ; but it was the King in His Humility, the King in the form of a Child. It was enough ; they are content, having seen and worshipped Him, to return to their own land, to make known, tradition says, the wondrous news, and to lay down their lives for the sake of the Holy Child : through the way of martyrdom to attain to His Eternal Presence.

The Collect recalls the leading and the manifestation. God calls, God leads, God manifests. It is for us to listen, to follow, and through faith to be capable of accepting His manifestation.

"Mercifully grant, that we which know Thee now by faith." The words are so few but convey so much. To know God now by faith. That is the purpose for which life is given us—to know God. "To know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent."

In knowing Jesus Christ we know God, for in Him is the manifestation of the Godhead—"God in man made manifest."

The knowledge by faith now is to have its final development and fulfilment hereafter—"may have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead."

For explanation of the words we can only turn to Rev. xxii. 3-5.

"His servants shall serve Him : and they shall see His Face ; and His Name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there ; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun ; for the Lord God giveth them light : and they shall reign for ever and ever."

The Epistle deals with the experience of one—St. Paul—who, through a personal Manifestation of the Risen Lord, knew Him now by faith.

And that Manifestation was not for himself alone, but that through him the Mystery of the Incarnation might be made known to the Gentile world. "How that by revelation He made known unto me the Mystery, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit ; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel."

Humility is the consequence in the Apostle of the Manifestation of Christ to him. He is "less than the least of all saints," but has grace given him to preach among the Gentiles "the unsearchable riches of Christ," in Whom is manifested the eternal purpose of God, and "in Whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him—(through our faith in Him. R.V.)."

We come—is it with diligent searching of heart, and carefulness of preparation?—to the Altar Throne of the Holy Child ; in humility, because we realise the greatness of the mystery of the Sacred Presence ; in lowly worship,

because by faith we behold the Majesty of our Heavenly King.

We come, because the light of His Holy Spirit has illumined our souls, because it has shone upon the words of our Master Himself and upon the teaching of His Holy Church, and revealed them to us in spirit and in truth. "This is My Body Which is given for you." The light shines upon the place where the Young Child is, and we know and are sure that "the Lord is in this place."

We come to offer to Him our gifts, for that is of the essence of true worship, our gifts of the gold of our devotion, the incense of our prayers, the myrrh of our self-sacrifice—our death to self and to the world.

And He—does He only accept our gifts, welcome our prayer, look favourably upon our profession of self-sacrifice? No, more than that—He *manifests* Himself to each as each is capable of receiving His manifestation; He gives to each, as each is fit, some "fruition of His glorious God-head" even now.

He takes our love and makes it, through union with His Own Love, more worthy of the name; He takes our prayers into His Own gracious Hands, and they are purified from their infirmities; He takes our self-sacrifice, and, through union with His Own Sacrifice, makes it worthy of presentation before the Throne of His Father.

(i.) Pray

(a) for the illuminating light of God the Holy Ghost, that you by faith may know the Mystery of the Incarnation in its fulness:

(b) for the guiding light of the Holy Ghost, that you, being led by the Spirit, may know no rest till you have found joy in the Presence of the Holy Child.

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- (ii.) Pray that through the power of the Holy Spirit there may be to you, in the Holy Eucharist, a Manifestation of the Son of God, of His Divinity, His Love, and His unsearchable riches.
 - (iii.) Pray that in your life, your words, your actions, you may be enabled, through the power of grace, to manifest Him to those who at present are ignorant of "the eternal purpose of God which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Ash Wednesday

The Collect.—Almighty and Everlasting God, Who hatest nothing that Thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of Thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Joel ii. 12. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. vi. 16.

Ash Wednesday, the first of the Forty days of Lent, the beginning of our preparation for the great Feast of the Resurrection.

“Through the grave and gate of death,” we are “to pass to our joyful resurrection.”

“By continual mortifying of our corrupt affections,” in Lent, we are to be buried with Christ: to become “dead indeed unto sin,” that we may be “alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Lent is the season of opportunity; it is a God-given period of opportunity for

- (i.) Separation, so far as is practicable, from the world and its amusements.
- (ii.) The devotion of less time to self, and more to God and to Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.
- (iii.) Self-discipline, in obedience to the laws of the Church.
- (iv.) Self-examination.

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- (v.) Sorrow for sin and real growth in penitence.
 - (vi.) The formation of habits of devotion.
 - (vii.) Preparation for a good Confession before, and Communion at, Easter.

As you render thanks to God for the opportunity vouchsafed to you, ask for grace to use it for His glory, and for the advancement of your soul in love and true righteousness.

Remember the keynote of the Quinquagesima Sunday, "All our doings *without charity* (love) are nothing worth ; send Thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues."

The end of Lent is neither growth in formalism, nor a service of bondage : its observance must be founded on a desire to love, and its end is a more perfect and willing service, springing from a quickened love.

"We love Him because He first loved us." The Love of God to man is put in the forefront of our daily prayer through Lent, and is the motive which is to inspire us to penitence and discipline.

"Almighty and Everlasting God"—Eternal in power, Unchanging in His Attributes—"Who hatest nothing that Thou hast made."

At once we are placed in our true position, and the truth of God's relationship to us is put in its true light. He has created us and is bound to us by the laws of His Fatherhood. We are not the mere children of time and of chance : we are the children of the Everlasting God, and His Hand is ruling and directing our eternal destinies.

"Though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies."

"For He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men."

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten : be zealous therefore, and repent."

We lose sight of the love of God : the trials of life, its inexplicable difficulties, its contradictions, overwhelm us. We see no reason why we should have to suffer this affliction, to bear this pain, to make such slow progress in the victory over temptation and in deliverance from sin. "Surely," we are tempted to say, "God cannot love, or He would not let me suffer thus, or be so heavily tried."

In Lent we draw near to the tempted, suffering Son of Man. "Behold, *we* go up to Jerusalem," He whispers to us, and on the way He tells us of the Love of Him Who hateth nothing that He has made.

And that does not exhaust His tenderness towards us—"and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent." The sins of doubt, of ingratitude, of distrust and forgetfulness, the sins against His Love, and against His Majesty, of which we take so little count ; all these, the daily, hourly sins of our lives, He is willing and waiting to forgive.

The only thing He asks of us is penitence, penitence which springs from the consciousness of His Love.

Lent unfolds the Passion of the Son of God, that learning love, as with faltering steps we follow, we may learn the meaning of a true repentance.

But He Who has created must also re-create ; we can do nothing by ourselves, His Holy Spirit must work in us and with us. "Create and make in us new and contrite hearts."

"I will give them a heart to know Me." "I will put a new spirit within you ; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh."

At the same time we read, "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart, and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

Man must work in co-operation with the power and will of God His Creator.

"Contrite," thoroughly bruised and broken. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, shalt Thou not despise."

"That we worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness."

1. Worthy sorrow for sin will depend upon

- (i.) recognition of the relationship of the sinner to Him against Whom the sin has been committed;
- (ii.) consciousness of the heinousness of sin in the sight of His holiness and love;
- (iii.) realisation of the effect of sin as separating us from Him—"our wretchedness."

2. Worthy sorrow will not rest content without full acknowledgment.

"I said, I will confess my sins unto the Lord: and so Thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin."

"My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto Him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me."

"Make confession unto *Him*; and hide it not *from me*." Christ in His Church provides for the hearing of the sinner's confession, and through His earthly ministry provides that which the sinner needs, that of which the Collect speaks—

"... may obtain of Thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness."

“The God of all mercy,” “God Who is rich in mercy,” —the gifts of Whose all-compassionate mercy are “perfect.” Where could we hope to stand but for our faith in the boundless mercy of our God, and our trust in the completeness of His forgiveness?

“Remission and forgiveness.”

“Without shedding of blood is no remission.”

“The Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

“Him hath God exalted to give forgiveness of sins.”

“Who forgiveth all thy sin, and healeth all thine infirmities.”

He, against Whom the sins have been committed, provides the means of cleansing and forgiveness, and reconciles the penitent soul to Himself.

“He only who hath proved it knows
What bliss from love of Jesus flows.”

The Epistle shows the Scriptural foundation of the Collect, containing as it does

(a) the revelation of God as “the God of all mercy”; “He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness”:

(b) an earnest call to repentance, a turning back to God from Whom we have wandered, as the sole Source of our restitution and forgiveness.

“Turn ye even to *Me*, saith the Lord.”

Note

(i.) the universality of the call: “call a solemn assembly, gather the people, assemble the elders, gather the children.”

“We have *all* sinned and come short of the glory of God.”

(ii.) the place in which the united sorrow for sin is to find expression.

“Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare Thy people, O Lord.”

It is in their Father’s House, and led by His appointed servants, that the children of God are to gather in the season of penitence, and there together to make supplications before Him.

Attendance at Divine worship before the Altar, and participation in the corporate acts of penitence of the Church, are no less a duty than our private devotions and our solitary confessions of sin—“These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the others undone.”

“Spare Thy people, O Lord, and give not Thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?”

When the children of God surrender themselves to the service of sin, the powers of evil quickly “rule over them,” and the enemies of God find occasion to blaspheme. The sin affects, not themselves primarily, but the glory of God their Father.

The Gospel, part of the Sermon on the Mount, is chosen appropriately as conveying to us our Blessed Master’s teaching on the great duty of fasting, and concerning the use of worldly possessions.

In the earlier verses of St. Matthew (chapter vi.) He has spoken of the duties of almsgiving and prayer, and it is well to notice the identity of His words as He deals with the three great Christian duties.

“When thou doest thine alms”; “When thou prayest”; “When ye fast.” Almsgiving, prayer, fasting, are recognised factors in the Christian life.

They are not dependent upon our personal inclination, to be undertaken if we feel so disposed, to be neglected without sense of omission. “Of course I say prayers, but I do not fast; I do not see the good of it. Yes, I give alms, sometimes more and sometimes less, but I have no rule on the subject.”

And yet the Master seems to place the three duties on an equal footing, and to regard them as matters of course in the life of His followers, “*When ye give alms, pray or fast,*”—not, “*If ye give alms and pray.*”

All are to be done by us as the children of God—so His Divine Son teaches us—in the Presence of our Father and for the glory of our Father only, “unto thy Father Which is in secret.”

The mortification of the flesh, the discipline of the body through fasting and abstinence, is lifted out of the plane of formal observance. It is undertaken for God, the efforts are commended to God; it is accomplished in obedience to Christ and His Church, and the results are left in the Hands of our “Father Which seeth in secret.”

The same heavenly light is shed by our Master upon the duty of almsgiving. We accept indeed His teaching; we own it *is* a duty, but it is so commonplace, so material; a subscription, a coin added to the Offertory.

Again the duty is lifted to a higher plane—“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.” You give not to men but to God. God accepts the gift, and the spirit of the gift. “Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto *Me.*”

How luminous, how blessed become the least and most commonplace acts of self-denial when thus performed. Offered to God, accepted of God, they bind the soul in

closer union to God, done as they are in obedience to the Voice of His Only-Begotten Son.

“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

“Set your affection on things above, not on things on this earth.”

“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”

He, the Treasure of all treasures, is to be found in the Sacrament of the Altar, and thither, as to a loadstone, our hearts are drawn by the attraction of His Presence, and there, in humblest adoration, our souls find rest and peace.

There He “brings out of His treasure things new and old”; new graces and new gifts because of our ever-changing need: the old gifts which never change, the sevenfold gifts of His Holy Spirit.

Lent is the time for prayer, and we come to Him in the Blessed Sacrament that we may learn of Him to pray, that we may place the imperfections of our prayers in His Most Gracious Hands, and that He may present them before our Father.

Lent is the time for fasting, for mortification of the flesh and subduing of the spirit, and we come to Him in the Holy Eucharist that, in the presence of His sacrifice, we may learn the spirit of sacrifice, and through union with His Body and Blood may be strengthened in the practice of bodily discipline.

Lent is the time for acts of mercy, consequent upon self-denial, and we come to the Throne of the Merciful Redeemer, poor, wretched, suppliants and dependents, that, comforted by Him “in all our tribulation, we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”

Resolve this Lent

- (i.) to devote so much additional time to prayer.
- (ii.) To deny yourself bodily gratification in some definite manner.
- (iii.) To devote a certain weekly sum to works of charity.
- (iv.) When you pray, fast, or give, to say always, "Our Father, Which seest in secret, Hallowed be Thy Name: in Thee and for Thee let all my acts be done."
- (v.) To be present at the Holy Eucharist according to a definite rule, on week days and Sundays.
- (vi.) To set aside a special time each week for self-examination, in preparation for confession before your Easter Communion—"That we worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of Thee, the God of all Mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness."

In *Preparation*—

"Turn ye even to Me, saith the Lord. Turn unto the Lord your God: for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness."

In *Communion*—

"Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here I am."

In *Thanksgiving*—

"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." "Pray for grace that thy heart may alway rest in heaven, and never be dragged down again by thy worse self."¹

Say "Our Father."

¹ "A Year of Eucharists."

Monday before Easter

The Collect.—Almighty and Everlasting God, Who, of Thy tender love towards mankind, hast sent Thy Son Jesus Christ, to take upon Him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the Cross, that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility; Mercifully grant, that we may both follow the example of His patience, and also be made partakers of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Isa. lxiii. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. Mark xiv. 1.

We have entered upon the last week of Lent, the last week of our preparation for the great festival of the Resurrection, and for our meeting with our Risen Lord in our Easter communion.

Note the stress which the Church lays upon that Easter communion. Three communions, at least, are expected of every faithful servant of Christ, without which no one can be reckoned as a loyal member of His Church. “Of which Easter shall be one.” That is a binding rule which no one who believes in the Divine authority of the Church can disobey.

Religion is a life, not a mere formal observance of a code of rules; it is a life, moreover, to be lived, not in our own strength, but through virtue of our union with the Incarnate life of Him Who is both the Way and the Life.

He has shown us the path of life; He has endured the

temptations and the sufferings of life ; He, through death, has conquered him who had the power of death ; at Easter He returns to us, the Lord of life and death, alive for evermore, the Object of our faith, our hope, and our utmost devotion.

- (a) Our faith—I believe “in One Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God, Who for us men, and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was Incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made Man, And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures.”
- (b) Our hope—“I look for the Resurrection of the dead, And the life of the world to come.”
- (c) Our devotion—“Who loved me, and gave Himself for me.”

On the first four days of the Holy Week,—or the Still Week, as it has been called,—we use the same Collect, that for Palm Sunday, thus keeping before us—

- (i.) The tender love of the Father in sending His Son to suffer and to die.
- (ii.) The necessity that we should follow the Divine example of humility and patience ;
- (iii.) If we would be “partakers of His Resurrection.”

Love ; humility ; patience ; the risen life ; those are the points which we must strive to keep before our minds throughout this Holy Week as we approach the Altar.

“Behold we go up to Jerusalem.”

“A broken heart, a fount of tears
Ask, and they will not be denied ;
Lord Jesus, may we love and weep
Since Thou for us art crucified.”

"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength?"

A. That is the question of the Epistle, and the question for us this Holy Week. "All the city was moved, saying Who is this?"

We gaze upon the "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"; we watch Him throughout His last days in Jerusalem; we see Him in the Temple, and listen to His last teaching; and again and again the question forces itself upon us, Who is this?"

We know but one answer, the answer of the Church and of the Bible; "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

Take the answers which are supplied by some of the expressions of the Holy Week.

1. "Blessed be the King that cometh in the Name of the Lord."
2. "The Son of Man"—His own expression.
3. "Jesus of Nazareth."
4. "Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"
And Jesus said, "I am."
5. "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

Note the blending of the kingship and the humiliation; "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

It is well that at the daily Eucharist, in the Creed, we should be called upon to rehearse the Divine titles of the Incarnate King, that we may be certified, in the Church's own words, Who it is Whom we follow during the Holy Week.

"The very and eternal God, of One substance with the Father, took Man's nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, of her substance: so that two whole and perfect

Natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in One Person, never to be divided, whereof is One Christ, Very God and Very Man : Who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried.” (Article II.)

Note, too, the answer of the Epistle to the question.

“I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.”

“This is His Name, whereby He shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness.”

“There is no Saviour beside Me.”

B. But the answer to the first question leads directly to a second—

“Wherefore art Thou red in Thine apparel, and Thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat ?”

It was from sin and the power of sin He came to save us, and “without shedding of blood is no remission of sin.”

We watch the tears as they roll down the Sacred Face of Jesus, we descend into the darkness of Gethsemane, we stand in Pilate’s Judgment Hall, we follow to Calvary, and there is but this answer to the question “Why art Thou red in Thine apparel ?”

“Thou shalt call His Name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.” But to save them, “The Good Shepherd” must give “His life for the sheep.”

“O sinner, mark and ponder well
Sin’s awful condemnation ;
Think what a sacrifice it cost
To purchase thy salvation.”

The Epistle seems fitted to remind us of “the tender love” of God in His dealings with the chosen people, contrasting with it the conduct of Israel towards Him “their Saviour.”

His “great goodness,” “His mercies,” “The multitude of His loving kindnesses,” are its theme. “In all their

affliction He was afflicted, and the light of His presence saved them : in His love and in His pity, He redeemed them."

"But they rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit ; therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them."

How God is ever the same, the same now that He was with the people of old ; and alas, how mankind is the same, ever spurning the goodness of God, ever rebelling, ever sinning against light and privilege.

There is something so prophetic of our sacramental privileges in the words—"where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock ? Where is He that put His Holy Spirit within him ?"

"So didst Thou lead Thy people, to make to Thyself a glorious Name."

"Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer, Thy Name is from everlasting."

"We are Thine : Thou never barest rule over them (our adversaries) ; they were not called by Thy Name."

We can only try to fix our thoughts on one point in the Gospel for to-day—it is the same that we have referred to in the Epistle—the contrast between the tender love of Jesus our Saviour, and the attitude towards Him of the different individuals brought into contact with Him.

1. The chief priests and scribes are seeking how they may take Him by craft and put Him to death.
2. Simon the leper invites Him to sit at meat in his home.
3. The woman with the box of ointment anoints His Body for the burying.
4. Judas sells his Master for thirty pieces of silver.

Meantime Jesus with full knowledge of that which is coming upon Him in His accomplishment of His Father's Will, makes His final preparation of love for His disciples and for His Church.

He institutes, in the Upper Chamber, the Holy Eucharist, and bequeaths to His Church His most precious Gift, the Blessed Sacrament of His Body and His Blood; using words whose efficacy shall last as long as the world endures, and which have embodied the faith, the life, the joy and consolation of His people from that night to this—“This is My Body”: “This is My Blood.”

We fix our minds on that scene, on Him, the Giver of the Feast, and the Feast itself, on the miracle of Love which by His words is wrought, on Him Who is both Priest and Victim; and sadly once more we contemplate those who surround Him, wondering, almost fearing, lest we shall recognise ourselves.

They pass from the Upper Chamber to the Mount of Olives, and His words tell of His coming sufferings and His enduring love.

“All ye shall be offended because of Me this night.”

“I looked and there was none to help.” “Of the people there was none with Me.”

He enters Gethsemane and “He saith to His disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. And He taketh with Him Peter, and James, and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy, and saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death; tarry ye here and watch.”

“And He cometh and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter: Simon, sleepest thou? couldst not thou watch one hour?”

“And when He returned He found them asleep again (for their eyes were heavy), neither wist they what to answer Him.”

5. Judas and the kiss of treachery. "He goeth straightway to Him and saith, Master, Master; and kissed Him."
6. "And they *all* forsook Him and fled."
7. The young man with the "linen cloth cast about his naked body," who fled rather than suffer with Jesus.

"And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests, and the elders, and the scribes."

8. The false witnesses.
9. The buffeting and the smiting of the Sacred Face.
10. The denial of St. Peter.

These ten points sum up the attitude of the world and, alas, of the followers of Jesus, towards Him their Saviour and their God.

Take the notes of contrast :—

1. He condescends to sit at meat in the house of Simon the leper.
2. He accepts the loving offering of devotion shown to His Sacred Body. "This also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."
3. He made preparation for the spiritual needs of His Church to the end of time in the Holy Eucharist.
4. He warns St. Peter of coming trial.
5. He admits His disciples into closest fellowship, and appeals to them for sympathy in the hour of bitterest agony.
6. He submits in lowliest patience to the kiss of treachery, and to the cruelty of His captors.
7. He stands in silence before false accusations, but
8. When questioned, "Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" leaves to His Church His

own testimony to the truth of His Being,
“I Am.”

9. His “Charity never faileth,” but “beareth all things, endureth all things” at the hands of His persecutors.
10. “Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said to him,” the word of love and warning. In another Gospel we read, “The Lord turned and looked upon Peter.”

The remembrance and the look broke the hard, self-confident heart—“And when he thought thereon he wept.”

There are the two thoughts for us to-day.

- (a) The tender love of Jesus :
- (b) Our own position amongst those brought into contact with Him during His Passion. Where do we stand ?

We draw near to the Altar, and the same words “tender love” meet us at the highest moment of the Eucharist—the Prayer of Consecration, in which we are reminded of “His one oblation of Himself once offered” on Calvary, the perpetual memory of which is continued in the Sacrifice of the Altar.

The Eucharist is the visible sign of the ever-present love of Jesus, a love universal and personal—“given for thee.” “Surely,” He says, “these are My people,” and He is “our Saviour.”

“In all our afflictions”—may we not say?—“He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved us: in His love, and in His pity He redeemed us, and has borne us, and carried us all the days of old.”

Is not that true of the lives of those, like ourselves, who have been admitted into fellowship with Him through

baptism, who have been sanctified by the presence of His Holy Spirit, and who are called by His Name?

There is no doubt as to the truth of His love for us—each Eucharist at which we have been present since last Holy Week is proof of His undying love for us; “the multitude of His loving kindnesses” have been without limitation.

It is the other side of the question we have to weigh so deeply—“But they rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit.” It is not enough to say “I am not conscious of any grievous sins committed.” If we have not corresponded to grace offered and received, if we have not grown more like unto the Divine Example, in humility, and in patience, if we have not learnt more of the risen Life, we have, surely, vexed His Holy Spirit, pained the tenderness of His love.

Think. His Own people, the Jews, set Him at nought and persecuted Him; and we?

His Own disciples, to whom He had just imparted the highest gift of love, slept while He implored their fellowship and bade them watch: and we, believers in, partakers of the Blessed Sacrament, we?

“Couldest thou not watch with Me one hour?”

Judas betrayed His Master; the young man fled in the presence of danger; Simon Peter, though warned, through self-confidence fell and denied His Lord; and we?

(i.) Pray, with all earnestness, for the light of God’s Holy Spirit, that

- (a) In the Holy Week you may realise the tender love of the Good Shepherd;
- (b) You may see your true position in relation to Him.

- (ii.) Examine self as to faith; humility; patience; gazing in humble faith upon the Divine Exemplar as you picture Him kneeling beneath the olive trees of Gethsemane, and as He is in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.
- (iii.) Pray earnestly for the grace of perseverance that you may never deny, nor forsake, nor betray the Lord Who bought you, but may so bear witness to Him in your life that He may hereafter bear witness to your fidelity—"Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father Which is in heaven."

Tuesday before Easter

The Collect.—Almighty and Everlasting God, Who, of Thy tender love towards mankind, hast sent Thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take upon Him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility; Mercifully grant, that we may both follow the example of His patience, and also be made partakers of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Isa. l. 5. *The Gospel.*—St. Mark xv. 1.

Note that these days of Holy Week are styled in the Prayer Book “before Easter,” not, as we should be more disposed to call them, “Tuesday in Holy Week,” &c. And yet, after all, a lesson is conveyed; Easter, the Resurrection, our own risen life in the Risen Lord, is to be the end of our thoughts; through death to life; “dead indeed unto sin, but alive with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Day by day we advance deeper into the Passion: daily we must strive, through our approach to the Blessed Sacrament, through our prayers, through our meditations and self-examination, to increase in knowledge of

(a) The tenderness of the Divine Love;

(b) Our true position in relation to the Divine Sufferer.

Such knowledge will lead to advancement in that humility which the Collect notes as the characteristic of "our Saviour Jesus Christ."

We shall, or we ought to, draw near to the Sacred Presence daily with an increased devotion and an increasing repentance. We only really know sin, and know ourselves as sinners, when prostrate before the Cross of Jesus.

There let us kneel, as these days of solemn moment pass, asking for more and more light, that we may "know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent."

"To Calvary ascending,
With Jesus let us go,
Beneath the shadow bending
Of all His mighty woe :
The Chief of our salvation,
Should we not follow nigh,
With all His tribulation,
In all His death to die ?"

In the Epistle we have depicted both the voluntary humiliation and the sufferings of the coming Messiah.

"Not only was Christ mighty in Divine power, and gracious in Divine Love, as He showed Himself to the Hebrew nation at the Exodus, and at the return from Babylon, but as Man, He stooped to their weaknesses and became His Father's disciple, in order to teach them Divine Wisdom." "As My Father hath taught Me, I speak."

"The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the learned"—or of disciples that are taught—"that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary," or rather "to comfort the weary with words."

"He Whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God,"

and "Though He was a Son yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered."¹

"Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the Prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on; and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death."

"I gave My back to the smiters and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My Face from shame and spitting."

Our Blessed Lord applies these words of the Prophet to Himself.

"Therefore have I set My Face like a flint." "He stedfastly set His Face to go up to Jerusalem."

"He is near that justifieth Me." "Behold the Lord God will help Me."

"And yet I am not alone because the Father is with Me."

"Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I know that Thou hearest Me always."

Listen to the voice of the Divine Exemplar Who goes before His people, even to suffering and death.

"Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His Servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

Truly in Gethsemane His soul was overwhelmed with darkness and there seemed no light; and yet, the consciousness of union with His Father sustained Him and He could say,

"O, My Father, if it be possible, let this Cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

¹ Wordsworth *in loco*.

On the Cross He hung in the awful darkness, typical of that desolation which had fallen upon His soul, and yet in the words of the Psalmist He could cry "My God, My God." He trusted in the Name of the Lord, and was stayed upon His God.

"Father, into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit."

"I came forth from the Father. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father."

The Epistle closes with solemn warning. Some there be who, instead of seeking the true light, follow the light of their own devising and of human origin. This is the solemn voice of Him Who came to be the Light of the world—

"Walk in the light of your fire and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of Mine Hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow."

God give us grace to walk as children of the Light, remembering that we "are all the children of light and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness."

The voices and the silence—so perhaps we may sum up to-day's Gospel. The contrast is so strong and seems to rivet our attention as we read St. Mark's narrative of the Passion.

St. Mark's writing is always condensed in form, here especially so.

We almost seem to hear the confused sound of the harsh Jewish voices as "the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes, and the whole council," and again as "they accused Him of many things" before Pilate.

Once, and only once, do we hear the Voice of the Divine Sufferer. It utters but two words, but they are of deep import, containing the full acknowledgment of His claims,

that none may doubt. With royal dignity, and with the calm confidence of a mind stayed upon God He asserts His claim, "Thou sayest (it)." And then—silence.

And now the voices of the multitude rise discordantly, overbearing the voice of Pilate—"Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?" "What will ye then that I shall do unto Him Whom ye call the King of the Jews?"

"Crucify Him," they cry. "Why, what evil hath He done?"—the witness of the Roman Judge to the innocence of Jesus. "Crucify Him, crucify."

And then the cruel scourging, and the mocking voices of the Roman soldiers, "Hail, King of the Jews," as "bowing their knees they worshipped Him." .

And all the time—Silence. Dwell upon the silence of Christ before Pilate, in the Prætorium, on the way to Calvary. Certain utterances are recorded by other Evangelists, but of these we shall speak later.

He hangs upon the Cross: around Him, beneath Him, are the faces of those who hated Him, and who are triumphing in their victory. Even those who hung by His Side added their voices of scorn. "They that were crucified with Him reviled Him."

Listen to the seething cries of hatred and mockery.

"Ah, Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save Thyself, and come down from the Cross."

"He saved others, Himself He cannot save. Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the Cross, that we may see and believe."

And He could have saved Himself, He could have come down from the Cross; but—"Now is My Soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: Father, glorify Thy Name."

"I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.
For the Lord will help Me, therefore shall I not be confounded."

Consider the Silence of conscious power.

But at last the silence is broken, and the revelation of the thoughts of the agonised Soul of Jesus is almost overwhelming—

"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Truly, He was walking in darkness and had no light, but, still He was stayed upon His God. Nothing, by virtue of the Hypostatic union, could ever separate Him from the Father, but around His Human Soul, while His Body endured the extremity of human anguish, rose the awful clouds of "the sin of the world."

If we could understand the meaning of "He hath made Him to be sin for us," we should know more clearly the meaning of the Voice of the Dereliction.

Once more the Voice is heard, not now in agony, but in triumph. "Jesus cried with loud voice, and gave up the Ghost." The witness to the truth of His Own words—"I lay down My Life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it from Me. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

We know what were the words of the final utterance—"Father"—"I leave the world and go to the Father"—"Father, into Thy Hands I commend my Spirit." In death as in life, He is stayed upon His God.

"Thou wilt keep Him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on Thee."

"I will lay me down in peace and take my rest"—not "ye shall lie down in sorrow."

As followers of Jesus and as desirous of being admitted

into fellowship with Him, we draw near to the Place of Sacrifice during these last days of His Passion.

Happy are we if we can say with Him “The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.”

If indeed we are learning in the Presence of His Humility something of our own true position in His sight, then, in growing humiliation for sin recognised, we shall be ready to give our backs to the smiters, and shall not hide our faces from shame.

“He is near that justifieth me. Behold the Lord God will help me.” Self is lost sight of in the Presence of Jesus: the sense of isolation which is one of our hardest trials is done away, as we kneel before the Altar.

“Come unto Me all ye that labour”—whatever your burden may be.

“Who is [among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the Voice of His Servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light, let him trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.”

“The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region of the shadow of death light is sprung up.”

That light shines from Calvary where the Light of the World is lifted up; and to each penitent, sorrowing soul it shines afresh from the Altar, irradiating the thick darkness of this world, and illuminating each soul which in humble faith draws near to “see this great sight.”

The silence of the Altar—how marvellous it is. Outside the House of God are the world-voices, doubting, mocking, hostile, the voices of the enemy and the blasphemer.

Even from those who are in His immediate Presence we hear the voice of reproach—“Why hast Thou thus dealt

with us? Surely you could deliver us: surely you could compel a world's respect and homage;" our faith in the Church, even in God Himself, seems to waver under the pressure of difficulty and seeming defeat.

And all the time He keeps silence. We speak so much, and He speaks so little. Yes, until He sees us fit to receive His words. The Cross must do its work in us, before we can hear the Voice, so tender and so sweet.

He is pleading all the time—"Father, forgive." When the work of purification has been accomplished the silence will be broken by the whispered assurance, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." When we have realised and repented of the sin which helped to bring darkness over His Soul on Calvary, then, at last, over us shall be heard the triumphant cry, "It is finished."

Oh, Saviour, hasten Thy gracious work within my soul. Break Thou my hard heart as I kneel in Thy loving Presence. Year after year hast Thou come seeking the fruit of Thy Passion in my barren heart and life, open Thou mine ear that I may hear Thy Voice, that I be no longer rebellious, that I no longer turn away back from following Thee and serving Thee.

"In this Thy bitter Passion
Good Shepherd, think of me
With Thy most sweet compassion,
Unworthy though I be:
Beneath Thy Cross abiding
For ever would I rest
In Thy dear love confiding
And with Thy Presence blest."

(i.) Examine self—

- (a) As to sins of word by which you have grieved the Sacred Heart of Jesus and sinned against the tenderness of His Love.

(b) As to the indifference and spiritual deafness, the consequence of sin, which have shut out from you the Voice of Jesus.

(ii.) "If thou desirest true contrition of heart enter into thy chamber, and shut out the tumults of the world, as it is written, 'In your chamber be ye grieved.'"

"In silence and in stillness a religious soul advantageth herself, and learneth the mysteries of the Cross."

"Who, therefore, withdraweth from acquaintance and friend, God will draw near unto Him with His Holy Angels."¹

Therefore pray God to open thine ear, that in the silence and stillness of the Eucharist thou mayest hear the Voice from Calvary speaking to thee.

(iii.) Pray for grace to "set thy face like a flint," in carrying out whatsoever Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament saith to thee. "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

¹ Thomas à Kempis.

Wednesday before Easter

The Collect.—Almighty and Everlasting God, Who, of Thy tender love towards mankind, hast sent Thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take upon Him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility; Mercifully grant, that we may both follow the example of His patience, and also be make partakers of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Heb. ix. 16. *The Gospel.*—St. Luke xxii. 1.

The Epistle for to-day and for Good Friday are taken from the Epistle to the Hebrews and intended to set before us the Sacrificial aspect of the Death of Christ.

Both passages contain points of difficulty in the way of interpretation and explanation, and while it is not desirable to attempt, at such a season, any prolonged explanation, it may be profitable to copy more or less literally from the writings of Bishop Westcott a few notes which will tend to a clearer understanding of the meaning of the writer of the Epistle.

I. The word translated “testament” (v. 16) would seem to be more accurately rendered as “covenant.” The idea is not that of a “will,” and of a “will-maker,” but of a “covenant” and a “covenant-maker.”

The system, the dispensation, established by Christ corresponds in the truest sense to a New Covenant, and

rests upon a Covenant. A Covenant requires, for absolute validity, ratification by death, as is conspicuously illustrated by the fundamental covenant-sacrifice in Gen. xv. and by the Covenant with Israel.

And this condition was satisfied by Christ. He was Himself the Covenant Victim. In this aspect He attested the inviolate force of the Covenant which He established.

Not in a figure only, but in reality, He showed how the Covenant was valid and must be valid. He made the new relation of man to God possible and sure.

His Death was an atonement for sin, and it was a perfect ratification of the Covenant which He made "in His Blood," in His Life offered and communicated.

In Him humanity fulfilled its part. For here we are considering not a Covenant between man and man, but between man and God. And that man may enter into such a relation he must yield up life, that he may receive it again. This Christ has done once for all men, and in Him, in virtue of His Life, all men can draw nigh to God.

Hence all the ceremonies connected with the inauguration of the old Covenant become fully intelligible. In that case also the life offered was imparted to the people in a symbol. The blood of the victims, whose death marked the ratification of the Covenant, was sprinkled on the people and on the sanctuary.

II. The Sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross is presented to us in the Epistle to the Hebrews under three distinct aspects—

- (i.) As a sacrifice of Atonement (ix. 14-15).
- (ii.) As a Covenant-Sacrifice (ix. 15-17).
- (iii.) As a Sacrifice which is the groundwork of a Feast (xiii. 10-11).

Christ was, at once, the Offerer and the Offering. In Him the victim and the people and the priest were one. He "offers Himself through the Eternal Spirit" (ix. 14), and so by the surrender of life He fulfilled the work of the people, of the humanity which He assumed.

Through His Blood He entered into the Divine Presence, and cleansed the heavenly archetypes of the earthly sanctuary (ix. 12-23), and so by the impartation of a new life He fulfils the work of the priest, having realised in His divine-human nature the end of man's existence.

The direct references to Christ's Death are naturally less frequent than the references to His Blood.

Death was the condition, under the actual circumstances of fallen man, whereby alone the Life of the Son of man could be made available for the race.

The Blood was the energy of Christ's true Human life, under the circumstances of earth, whereby alone man's life receives the pledge and the power of a divine glory.

Thus the two—the Blood and the Death—correspond generally with the two sides of Christ's work, the fulfilment of the destiny of man as created, and the fulfilment of this destiny though man has fallen.

It becomes necessary, therefore, in order to gain a complete view of the Sacrifice of Christ, to combine with the crowning act upon the Cross His fulfilment of the Will of God from first to last (x. 5), the Sacrifice of Life with the Sacrifice of Death.

We may note one other point in the Epistle—"Almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission."

"Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things . . . but with the Precious Blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

"As it is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment."

For each man death, for each man judgment. The whole teaching is of our individuality. Each will have had his opportunities of cleansing and of union, through the power of the Precious Blood. He, the priest, "sprinkled both the book, and *all* the people, saying, 'This is the Blood of the Covenant, which God hath enjoined unto you.'"

It is to this thought of our individual relationship to our Master, whether in His Sacrifice or in His Life, of our personal responsibility consequent upon His personal dealings with us, that our attention is drawn in the Gospel.

This day, following the guidance of St. Luke, we begin with the preparation for the Paschal Feast, and close with the scenes in the High Priest's house and our Blessed Lord's witness to His Divine Sonship : "Art Thou the Son of God?" "Ye say that I am."

Satan enters into Judas, surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve, and leads him to treachery and betrayal of his Lord.

To two of the disciples, Peter and John, is the command given, "Go and prepare us the passover that we may eat."

The good man of the house is to receive the Master's message. "The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest-chamber?"

In that guest-chamber, alone with His disciples, He institutes the Holy Eucharist, and in that solemn Feast communicates to each of them His Body and His Blood. Each receives, each is admitted into that mystic and personal communion with the Lord.

Note, in connection with the Epistle, the words, "This

Cup is the new Covenant in My Blood, even that which is poured out for you" (R.V.).

And it is an individual whose presence mars the sacred peace of the Institution, and the knowledge of whose act brings a shadow across the Mind of the Redeemer. "The hand of him that betrayeth Me is with Me on the table."

Even there, even in the Presence of the Master so soon to be parted from them, there springs up the strife of perverted individuality. The question which divides them is not one of zealous rivalry, in the attainment of likeness to their Master and of obedience to His slightest command, but "which of them should be accounted the greatest."

Human ambition, the pushing forward of self, the desire for notice or advancement, how often it mars even our communion with our Lord.

"Ye shall not be so. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as He that serveth."

"That all mankind should follow the example of His great Humility." Can we imagine any humility greater than His condescension in serving us, in whom the spirit of pride manifests itself so strongly?

Note the contrast once again between the humility and the Kingly power of Christ, of the existence of which He is fully conscious.

"I am among you as He that serveth"—the extreme of humility.

"I appoint unto you a Kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me." It is the King Who speaks in consciousness of His Kingly power.

And then the Lord, looking with tenderest love over the individual faces of His followers, lets His eyes rest with

unutterable sadness upon Simon Peter, and knowing his special characteristics and consequent special temptations, gives to him a special warning.

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat." There is an individual sifting ever going on, the powers of evil directing their forces against each life and conscience.

"But I have prayed for *thee*, that thy faith fail not." The prayer of Jesus rising before the Father for each soul in its peculiar and unrecognised temptation.

And then, He the King, the Lord and Master, Who has said of Himself, "I am among you as He that serveth," alone, under thes hadow of Gethsemane, suffers all human suffering, endures, in His Will, all human temptation, and alone wins the victory over self for every one of His followers. "Not My Will, but Thine be done."

Even He cannot bear the solitude of His Agony. Backward and forward we see Him pass, drawing near to the sleeping followers as though craving for their presence and their sympathy.

Again note the individual care for even His enemies, if their lot be one of suffering. "He touched his ear, and healed him."

And for His follower and friend. In spite of self-confidence, in spite of the loving warning so recently given, forgetful of privileges received, Peter denies his Lord, "I know Him not."

"And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter; and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice."

Who shall tell of the wonders of that conversion? The piercing look of unselfish Love has penetrated to the man's

inmost being. The whole story of Christ's personal love and personal dealing with his self-confident nature is bare before him. All his arrogance and self-reliance, all his sin and all its aggravations, pass before his mental vision. His heart knew its own bitterness, and in the agony of his repentance, "Peter went out and wept bitterly."

It is the history of a soul in its individual relationship to its Lord.

In the Holy Eucharist we have the "perpetual memory" of the Sacrifice of Calvary. There the Great High Priest, by "His one oblation of Himself, once offered," made "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world"; and on the Altar that same Sacrifice of Calvary is re-presented and perpetuated "until His Coming again."

There is but one Sacrifice; there is but one Priest; there is but one Victim—that is, Jesus Christ our Lord. In union with the Great High Priest the earthly priest offers the Divine Sacrifice; the Body broken and the Blood outpoured is that of the Saviour of the world, for "the Cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the Communion of the Blood of Christ? The Bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Christ?"

In the Blessed Sacrament we find Jesus of the Upper Chamber, Jesus of Gethsemane, Jesus of the Judgment Hall and of Calvary—"this same Jesus." Time and scene make no change in His individual dealings with the souls of men.

Still His commands are issued to us His followers; to one "Prepare;" to another "The Master saith unto thee, where is the guest-chamber?" He desires to be received into our souls as the Heavenly Guest—how infinite the privilege—and it is for us to offer "the large upper room

furnished" with good desires and a perfected repentance, for His acceptance in our Easter Communion. He comes that He may bestow upon the soul the fulness of His gifts.

Consider the humility of the Eucharist—"I am among you as He that serveth." He knows, through His taking of our flesh, the needs of every human nature, and possessing the treasures of a King, He stoops to minister to us, the humblest of His subjects.

The Majesty and the Humility of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. What so humble as a lowly Altar in a poorly furnished Church, a little Bread, and a little Wine, and yet—the Presence of the Eternal Majesty, of Him before Whom angels veil their faces?

He pleads with each soul that draws near, for He knows its weakness and its characteristic failings. There is no upbraiding, only the tenderest warning and the appeal of love—"Abide in Me, and then thou shalt be safe from falling."

"Since thou hast been my servant, hast thou lacked anything?" And we are compelled to own, with His disciples, "Nothing." The washing of regeneration, the gifts of the Spirit, pardon through the Precious Blood, union with Himself—all have been ours, we have lacked nothing. And yet, how far we are from what we might be.

To every soul, at some period of life, there comes a Gethsemane, when the consciousness of sin, or the dread of the future, the sense of isolation, with anguish both of body and soul, presses us down to the very earth. "Father," we cry, "I cannot bear it, let this cup pass from me."

Who has not uttered some such cry before the Altar, hardly daring to put the thoughts into words, hardly daring to look up.

"And One came by with Wounded Side," and a Pierced Hand has seemed to grasp our own, and a Voice Whose tones have brought a sense of infinite wonder and infinite peace has spoken to our souls. "I ask thy will, and I blend it with Mine, that thou mayest be able to say in union with Me, 'Father, not my will, but Thine be done.'"

Think what it is to be never absent from the Mind of Jesus. He warns, He waits, He watches, He knows all that passes within our souls.

In the midst of our selfish pre-occupation, of our "warming ourselves" in the consideration of our own comfort, while His glory is being trodden under feet by enemies and blasphemers, we become conscious of a regard, so penetrating, so loving, so convincing, that even our hard hearts are broken. "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter."

The past, the present, the future, all become visible to us in the light of the Sacred Face as it shines upon our souls from the Altar.

We dare not put into words the utterance of our hearts at such a moment. We can but pray for grace, like St. Peter, to "weep bitterly."

"A broken heart, a fount of tears,
Ask and they will not be denied;
A broken heart love's cradle is,
Jesus, our Love, is crucified."

- I. Pray for the grace of a true contrition, as you consider your life, past and present, in the Presence of Jesus, the Lamb of God.
- II. Ask for the Divine light that—
 - (i.) In temptation you may behold the Form of Jesus in His Agony, ready to save.

(ii.) In the Blessed Sacrament you may behold the marks of His Passion, and see Him stooping to minister to thee.

III. Listen in humble awe and deepest humility to the words, "The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for *thee*, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life."

Say often, "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

Thursday before Easter

The Collect.—Almighty and Everlasting God, Who, of Thy tender love towards mankind, hast sent Thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take upon Him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility; Mercifully grant, that we may both follow the example of His patience, and also be made partakers of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—1 Cor. xi. 17. *The Gospel.*—St. Luke xxiii. 1.

Maundy Thursday—the day of the new Commandment (*mandatum*). “A new Commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”

“This is My commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

“These things I command you, that ye love one another.”

Love for God His Father, and love for those who are His brethren according to the flesh, is the characteristic of the Human Life of Jesus Christ our Lord. This love is to be, by His repeated command, the distinguishing mark of His followers. “By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

As a final proof of His love, and as a means whereby the love which He commanded shall be preserved and strengthened, He institutes and bequeaths to His Church the Holy Eucharist, the Feast of Love to which none are to approach in whom “ malice and hatred are perceived to reign.”

Think of the joy of the gift of Jesus, not only the joy which He experienced, even in the presence of His Passion, in giving, but the joy which it enshrines for us its recipients.

It is the last gift of a Friend to His friends.

It is His best gift, because it is the gift of Himself.

It is a gift of inexhaustible fulness. “ Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

It is the Heavenly Manna. “ He that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack ;” a gift to every man according to his needs.

It is the Food of the wayfaring man, of him who treads the Way of the Cross in the Footsteps of Jesus. It is the Food which shall sustain the soul in death, the Food of everlasting life.

“ Whoso eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, hath eternal life ; and I will raise Him up at the last day. For My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed.”

The Epistle contains the account given by St. Paul of the Institution of the Holy Eucharist, an account of which the Apostle says, “ I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you.”

“ The Lord Jesus the same night in which He was (being) betrayed took bread : And when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat : This is My

Body which is (being) broken for you : this do in remembrance (or, for a remembrance) of Me."

" After the same manner also He took the Cup, when He had supped, saying, This Cup is the new testament (or covenant) in My Blood : this do ye, as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of Me."

" For as often as ye eat this Bread and drink this Cup, ye do show forth (or proclaim) the Lord's death till He come."

Note how close is the connection between the Passion and the Eucharist.

" Christ's Sacrifice and ours are not two, but one. There is but 'One Offering,' the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. It is He who lives and works in us, He is the Head, and we the members. We only 'fill up,' as the Apostle says, 'that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in our flesh for His Body's sake, which is the Church.' Of all this the Bread and Wine of Holy Communion are the appointed Sacrament. May we indeed know what this Communion is." ¹

" Wherefore whosoever shall eat this Bread and drink this Cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord."

Unworthiness springs from want of preparation, and the existence of a spirit contrary to the spirit of love which animated the Giver of the Feast.

Note how in her rubrics and exhortations the Church guards the Blessed Sacrament from unworthy approach. In the arrangement of her buildings (chancels, &c.) the Church teaches by visible means the same lesson.

" But let a man examine himself," test himself by the

¹ "Order of the Church's Teaching," Jukes.

great law of love, enunciated by the King of Love Himself, “and so let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup.”

“For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation (*i.e.* judgment) to himself, not *discerning* the Lord’s Body.”

There is the summing up of the whole matter. It is “the Lord’s Body,” which by faith is not created but discerned.

Hence the need of preparation; hence the need of a “worthiness” in those who approach; hence the need for a spirit attuned to His Spirit Who there invites us to union with Himself; hence the offering of our best, of our selves, our souls and bodies, the best of our gifts, the best of our devotion and self-sacrifice, as we approach the “Blest Memorial of our dying Lord.”

“The Gospel goes on to give us further particulars of the Great Sacrifice. Throughout it is the perfect giving up of self to God in everything—showing us, as words can never show it, what that Communion is, to which we are called, as partakers of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ our Lord.”¹

We read yesterday of the trial before the High Priest; to-day we enter upon a fresh scene, the trial before Pilate, the sending of the Divine Prisoner to Herod, and then of the return to Pilate and the Judgment Hall.

The long hours of the Passion and the protracted sufferings of our Lord become increasingly real to us. Consider the Agony in the Garden, followed by the betrayal, the questioning in the house of the High Priest; then “the whole multitude arose, and led Him unto Pilate”; then to Herod, where “the chief priests and the scribes stood and

¹ Jukes.

vehemently accused Him. And Herod with his men of war set Him at nought, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate."

Consider what all this meant to One worn with agony, fasting, suffering, enduring unknown spiritual trial. So few words of narrative cover such prolonged anguish of soul and body.

There are two striking contrasts to be noted.

I. Pilate, we read, was "willing to release Jesus"; with weak injustice he offers to "chastise" One Whom he knows to be innocent of the charges laid against Him, and to "let Him go."

"And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified: and the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate delivered Jesus to *their will*."

Consider what that "will" was; the awful horrors of a will given up to the dominion of evil, finding its satisfaction in the torture and death of One Whom they hated, and that One, the Redeemer of the world.

Think of the unutterable humiliation involved in the Son of God being surrendered to the will of the creatures of His Hand in their frenzy of hatred and rebellion.

Then correct the phrase; He was not surrendered by Pilate to *their will*; He of His Own Will, that the work of our salvation might be accomplished, surrendered Himself to *their will*.

Contrast the will of man under the dominion of evil; and the will of the All-perfect Son of God, saying, "Lo, I come. In the volume of the book it is written of Me, that I should fulfil Thy Will, O My God: I am content to do it; yea, Thy law is within My heart."

Christ came to set free the will of man from bondage ; that man might find his highest liberty in the surrender of his own will to God, in union with the will of the Incarnate Son. "Teach me to do Thy Will ; for Thou art my God."

II. "And as they led Him away, they laid hold upon one Simon a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the Cross, that he might bear it after Jesus." "Him they compelled to bear His Cross," St. Matthew tells us.

Simon bore the Cross under compulsion, not by his own will but by the will of others. Christ bore His Cross and all that the Cross involved willingly, offering Himself a willing Victim. "I gave My back to the smiters."

Remember what He said in Gethsemane, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently (even now, R.V.) give Me more than twelve legions of angels ?"

He could have prayed, He could have asked ; but—"The Cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it ?"

"O most merciful Jesus, let Thy Will be mine, and let my will ever follow Thine, and agree perfectly with it."¹

The unselfishness of Jesus in the Passion.

(i.) "Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." As He looked for the last time before His Death upon Jerusalem all its coming woes were present to His Mind, and the sufferings of the tender and the innocent—the women and the children—which He fore-sees, blot out His Own agony of Body. He thinks not of Self, but of them.

¹ St. Thomas à Kempis.

- (ii.) As He is stretched upon the hard bed of the Cross and the cruel nails pierce His Sacred Body, His thoughts are entirely of those who in ignorance are causing Him such agony. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."
- (iii.) One of the malefactors hanging by His Side, touched by His unselfish patience, by His Majesty of suffering as He hangs uncomplaining in the agony of crucifixion, rebukes his companion, makes his confession of sin—"we indeed justly,"—and in humble faith and penitence offers his prayer, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom." To him too comes the word of unselfish love, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." No want unthought of, no plea unnoticed ; in death as in life, nothing for Himself.

See the immediate effects of this willing, unselfish Sacrifice—

"When the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous Man."

"And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things that were done, smote their breasts, and returned."

Give us grace, O Blessed Jesus, to acknowledge Thee, the Lord our Righteousness, and to glorify Thy Father by our lives of self-surrender.

Grant that we, beholding Thine unselfish love manifested to us in Thy Sacred Passion, may likewise "smite upon our breasts" in true contrition and sorrow for our selfish lives, and may return from the contemplation of Thy sufferings to serve Thee henceforth in newness of life.

The Passion and the Eucharist : how closely united.

Still in the Sacrament of the Altar He says, "Lo, I come to do Thy Will, O God." Still in obedience to the Father's Will, He presents His all-prevailing Sacrifice; still He accomplishes the Father's Will, in the sanctification of the lives of us, His members.

Still He comes to us, in royal Humility, stooping to bestow His Presence upon us under humblest forms, condescending still to ask for communion, for fellowship, with the humblest of His brethren. In spite of our apathy, coldness, neglect, selfishness, still He pleads with us and for us.

Still He knows the present and the future of each human life. "Weep for yourselves and for your children." We know not whither our actions and example are leading ourselves and others; but He knows, and in the Eucharist pleads for us, and by the memory of His Passion pleads with us, "Is it nothing, all ye that pass by?"

"Father"—from the Altar the prayer still rises—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Alas, we forget that by our lives, by our careless, *faithless*, unprepared Communions, we "crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame."

"To-day, if only you will turn to Me as I hang upon My Cross, in penitence and faith acknowledging Me, even in My humility, as your Saviour and your King, to-day shalt thou be with Me in the Paradise of My love."

"I thirst," the Voice pleads with us from the Altar, "I thirst for thy penitence, thy devotion, and thy love." Is it possible? Is it possible that the Son of God should desire communion with me, so sinful and so unworthy, that His thirst cannot be quenched unless I give Him to drink? The wonder is overpowering, but the fact is true.

"O ye who are blind, come to the Altar: Jesus Christ is on the Altar, as aforetime He was on the way to Jericho,

and He will open your eyes to the light. O ye who are without strength and courage to walk in the paths of virtue, come to the Altar ; Jesus is on the Altar, as He was at Capernaum ; and He will say to you as He did to the paralytic, ‘Thy sins are forgiven thee ; arise and walk.’ What more shall I say ? Ah, ye who are weary, troubled, and agitated by the storms of time, shelter yourselves near the Altar ; Jesus is present on the Altar, as aforetime on the Lake of Galilee, and He has there also but to speak one word, and there shall be in your soul a great calm.”¹

We want that “great calm” in our souls as we watch beside the Cross on Good Friday, as we approach the empty tomb on Easter Day.

In *Preparation*—

Psalm xliii.

In *Communion*—

“On the Cross lay hidden but Thy Deity ;
Here is also hidden Thy Humanity :
But in both believing, and confessing, Lord,
Ask I what the dying thief of Thee implored.

Though Thy Wounds, like Thomas, I behold not now,
Thee, my Lord, confessing, and my God, I bow ;
Give me ever stronger faith in Thee above,
Give me ever stronger hope and stronger love.”

In *Thanksgiving*—

“O praise the Lord, ye that fear Him : magnify
Him, all ye of the seed of Jacob, and fear Him, all
ye seed of Israel.”

¹ “Meditation on the Eucharist,” De la Bouillerie.

“For He hath not despised, nor abhorred the low estate of the poor: He hath not hid His Face from him, but when he called unto Him He heard him.”

“My praise is of Thee in the great congregation: my vows will I perform in the sight of them that fear Him.”

Good Friday

The Collects.—Almighty God, we beseech Thee graciously to behold this Thy family, for which our Lord Jesus Christ was contented to be betrayed, and given up into the hands of wicked men, and to suffer death upon the cross, Who now liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

Almighty and everlasting God, by Whose Spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified; Receive our supplications and prayers, which we offer before Thee for all estates of men in Thy holy Church, that every member of the same, in his vocation and ministry, may truly and godly serve Thee; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

O Merciful God, Who hast made all men, and hatest nothing that Thou hast made, nor wouldest the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live; Have mercy upon all Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Hereticks, and take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of Thy Word; and so fetch them home, blessed Lord, to Thy flock, that they may be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites, and be made one fold under one Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Spirit, One God, world without end. Amen.

The Epistle.—Heb. x. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. John xix. 1.

“Good Friday brings before us the crowning act of the trial which the Forty Days of Lent commemorate,

shewing us *Man's just judgment*, borne by Christ for us, that is ‘death, even the death of the Cross’; and also *Man's last and perfect self-sacrifice* even unto death, in Christ our Lord; by which the curse is turned into a blessing.

“This double aspect of Christ’s death, as a ‘Non-sweet-savour or Sin-Offering,’ and as also, at the same time, a ‘Sweet-Savour’ and Voluntary Offering, is very distinctly brought before our notice here.”¹

The first Collect speaks of the Voluntary or Sweet-Savour Offering: “Our Lord Jesus Christ was contented to be betrayed;” and then of the Non-sweet-savour aspect of the same offering; “given up into the hands of wicked men to suffer death upon the Cross.”

The Epistle notes the same two aspects of His Death, both as a “sacrifice” and an “offering”; as a “burnt-offering” and as an “offering for sin”; in which “He offers one sacrifice for sins for ever”; and in which also “by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”

The Gospel shows the same, where even the Roman Judge says, “I find no fault in Him,” while yet He is “crucified between two thieves.”

“And the ‘blood’ and the ‘water’ from His pierced Side bear the same witness; for, as St. John says, ‘He came not by water only, but by water and blood’; that is, not with death and judgment only, but with life; for ‘the water’ is death—‘we are buried by baptism into death’—and ‘the blood is the life,’ the very Life of God which He freely gives us, that we may drink and live.”²

¹ Jukes, “The Order and Connexion of the Church’s Teaching.”

² Jukes, “The Law of the Offerings.”

"I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw *all* men unto Me."

In view therefore of the Cross upon which the Son of Man was lifted up, the Church includes *all* in her solemn Collects.

- (i.) "We beseech Thee to behold this Thy family"—those who are admitted into the position of sons of God through Holy Baptism; signed with the sign of the Cross, as the stamp of membership with the Crucified Lord, and pledged "to confess the faith of Christ Crucified."
- (ii.) The gift of the Crucified and Risen Lord is the indwelling presence of God, the Holy Ghost. Hence we say, "By whose Spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified;" and we offer our supplications and prayers for "all estates of men in Thy Holy Church"—the Church founded on the Crucified Lord—"that every member of the same, in his vocation and ministry, may truly and godly serve Thee." Redeemed by the Son of God, sanctified by His Holy Spirit, to *each one* there is a separate vocation, and to some that vocation leads to a special ministry.

Before the Cross of Him Who was called to suffer, and Who in obedience to His Father's Will came "not to be ministered unto but to minister," we pray that each and all of His followers may "in their vocation and ministry, truly and godly serve Him."

Can we be content with anything less than a "true and godly" service, as we spend this day around the deathbed of our Master, as we watch Him in the agonies for us endured, as we mark His last service rendered to His Father, and to His brethren according to the flesh.

(iii.) Then we include in our supplication *all*, those at present outside His Kingdom, those who as yet reject His claims—"they know not what they do"—all those whose eyes, through "ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of Thy Word" are as yet blinded to the beauty and majesty of His Love, and whose ears are deaf to the tenderness of His appeal.

"So fetch them home, Blessed Lord, to Thy flock, that they may be made one fold under one Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord."

"Other sheep I have," He had said, "which are not of this fold: them also must I bring, and they shall hear My Voice; and there shall be One Fold, and One Shepherd."

"Neither pray I for these alone"—His Apostles—"but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one."

We enter deeply into the Spirit of our Master as thus we pray. Wide was His Love, and wide and all-embracing must be our prayers beneath His Cross, and earnestly and faithfully must we pray for that unity of which He spoke—"that they all may be one."

We need to humble ourselves before the Cross for our lamentable divisions, and that exhibition of party spirit to which we all so frequently contribute, and by which we hinder the unity for which our Master prayed.

"Regard not our sins but the faith of Thy Church, and grant her peace and unity according to Thine Own will."¹

The Epistle tells us, as we have noticed, of the Sacrifice of Christ, which is twofold in its character, fulfilling the types both of the burnt-offering and the sin-offering.

"In the first class (of offerings)—that is the Burnt-offer-

¹ "Hereford Missal."

ing, the Meat-offering, and the Peace-offering—the offerer came for acceptance as a worshipper."

"In the second class, in the Sin and Trespass-offerings, he came as a sinner to pay the penalty of sin and trespass."

"In either case the offering was without blemish; for the Sin-offerings required perfectness in the victim as much as the Burnt-offering. But in the one the offerer appears as man in his perfectness, and in his offering stands the trial of fire—that is, God's searching holiness; and accepted as a fragrant savour, all ascends a sweet offering to Jehovah. In the other, the offerer appears as a sinner, and in his offering bears the penalty due to his offences."¹

When we think of Christ fulfilling in His Sacrifice the type of the Burnt-offering "we do not consider Him as the Sin-bearer, but as Man in perfectness meeting God in holiness."

The thought here is not "God hath made Him to be sin for us," but rather "He loved us, and gave Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savour."

In the Burnt-offering Christ appears *for us*, not as our Sin-bearer, but as Man offering to God the something which is most precious to Him.

It is not enough for us to think of the Death of Christ and of all that that Death has accomplished for us; that would be selfish and meagre. We have to think of the Life of which that Death was on earth the close; that Death was the fulfilment of a Life which was in all things a voluntary surrender of the will to His Father, and in which He was in all things "a sweet savour to Jehovah."

"Then said I, Lo, I come to do Thy Will, O God." The transitoriness and want of permanent efficacy in the

¹ Jukes, "The Law of the Offerings."

sacrifice of the Law are contrasted with the all-perfect offering “of the Body of Jesus Christ once, for all.” “For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”

From the type we turn in the Gospel to the Antitype, to Mount Moriah where the true Isaac is offered; “Behold, the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering.” “Then said I, Lo, I come to do Thy Will, O God.” “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away (beareth) the sins of the world.”

The King and the Lamb. “Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote Him with their hands.”

“Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the Man !”

“Thou art the King of Glory ; O Christ,
Thou art the Everlasting Son of the Father.”

And yet, “Behold the Man !”

The whole mystery of our redemption is summed up in that contrast. We gaze upon the fathomless depths of love which the words reveal, and our hearts stand still in the contemplation of the marvel of the Love of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Mark the consciousness of Him Who stands before the earthly judge, of His Own Divine Power in Union with His Father. “Thou couldest have no power at all against Me except it were given thee from above.” Compare—“By Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and

for Him." All power is from above, and yet He stands a willing and powerless Prisoner.

Pilate had already borne witness to His innocence—"I find no fault in Him ;" now he seeks to release Him. But the voice of the world prevails—"Crucify Him, Crucify Him."

Choose between Cæsar and the Christ. Which shall it be? We cannot bow before the Heavenly King, and at the same time be the friend of the world. The test is still the same—whom shall I serve?

Again Pilate brings Him forth before the people, but his words are changed. It is no longer "Behold the Man," but "Behold your King." It is as though the Majesty of his Prisoner had affected Pilate even in his injustice; He repeats the title, "Shall I crucify your King?"

"The Man," Yes. "Who *for us men and for our salvation* came down from heaven, And was made MAN."

"Your King." Consider, as you behold Him in the Judgment Hall, consider His claims upon your loyalty and allegiance. Will you crucify your King? Will you join in the cry, "We will not have this Man to reign over us," "We have no King but Cæsar"?

See Him led forth to Calvary, lifted up upon the Cross, and there again His claim meets you. "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

"Fulfilled is now what David told
In true prophetic song of old,
How God the heathen's King should be ;
For God is reigning from the Tree."

One there is in whom the discipline of suffering and the contemplation of the patience of the King of Love awake a

sense of the hidden Majesty of his fellow-sufferer. "Lord, remember me, when Thou comest into Thy kingdom."

Is it through suffering, through long experience of His forbearance that we are to be brought to a perfect acknowledgment of our King? If so, welcome the Cross and the discipline of the Divine Love. "No Cross, no Crown."

He is the King, but yet He is the Perfect Man, perfect in His human love for the Blessed Mother who bare Him, for the sinner whom He saved, for the disciple whom He loved.

Are there any words so full of pathos as those which tell us, "There stood by the Cross of Jesus, His Mother"?

"A Son that never did amiss,
That never sham'd His Mother's kiss,
Nor cross'd her fondest prayer :
Even from the Tree He deign'd to bow
For her His agonized brow,
Her, His sole earthly care."

Truly His thought was for "this Thy family," for the Beloved Disciple in his vocation and ministry, for the sinner saved, for all sinners who, as yet, rejected Him.

Not only was He the all-availing Sacrifice, but the Perfect example of suffering. No word of self, no murmur of complaint; all for others, and for His Father's glory.

Hour by hour He hangs, nailed by His Own Will to the Tree of shame, offering up thereby a whole Burnt-Offering to Jehovah. He bears the fullest agonies of pain and the burning torture of thirst. His whole Body is consumed with suffering. At length, when "All things are now accomplished," when the sacrifice is complete, and at the same time the King's final victory is won, at length He says, "It is finished," and of His Own Will and of His Own Power "He bowed His head and gave up the ghost."

Only when the voluntary Sacrifice has been offered in its fulness, only when the full penalty of sin has been paid by Him, as man's representative, can He say "It is finished."

"Father, into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit.

"I will lay Me down in peace, and take My rest ;
for it is Thou, Lord, only that makest Me dwell in safety."

"Freely Thy life Thou yieldest, meekly bending
E'en to the last beneath our sorrow's load,
Yet strong in death, in perfect peace commanding
Thy Spirit to Thy Father and Thy God."

Gaze upon that Cross, and upon the Form of Him Who hangs lifeless thereon and say to thy soul, "Jesus is dead, and dead for love of *me*."

Beneath the Cross let us seek to deepen our preparation for that Easter Communion which awaits us. Death is not the end, but life in the Risen Lord.

There must be death—"dead indeed unto sin," but out of that death is to spring life—"alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

As we kneel before the Cross on Good Friday, we *know* that we can only duly receive the Precious Body and Blood at Easter, if we have been united with our Master in both aspects of the Sacrifice which on that day He offered before the Father. There must be the burnt-offering, the sacrifice of the will, not in one act alone, but in every detail of the life, and there must be the acceptance of the penalty of sin.

Therein, so often lies the difficulty, "I cannot face it. I know what my sins deserve, I know the penalty I ought to pay, the shame to which I ought to put myself, the reparation to God and man which I ought to make, but—"

And that is the very crisis of our lives. The will is weak, we cannot make the perfect offering ; we cannot give up, as yet, that which hinders and keeps us back. "A good confession? No, I shrink from it. A forsaking of the things, the entanglements, the affections, which are so completely a part of my life? Well, I will think of it ; I will see whether in time I cannot get rid of the things of which, I own, I feel ashamed."

"BEHOLD THE MAN!"

For thee the Son of God became Man : for thee He lived, suffered on the Cross, and gave up the ghost ; for thee He rose again, that thou mightest live in newness of life. Will you tarry? Will you ask Him to wait till you have made up your mind? Will you be content to offer to *Him*, Jesus of the Cross, Jesus of the Resurrection, an uncleansed soul, a halting will, an irresolute mind, in your Communion on Easter Day?

" Behold the Lamb of God !
O Thou for sinners slain,
Let it not be in vain
That Thou hast died ;
Thee for my Saviour let me take,
My only refuge let me make
Thy piercèd Side."

"BEHOLD YOUR KING!"

Yes, it is not only that He allures you to the way of Sacrifice, that He stretches forth His arms to you from the Cross, sets before you the Example of His humility, and condescends, in the tenderness of His love, to inspire in you a desire to offer yourself willingly in union with Him. He is *your King*, and He has the Monarch's right to issue

to you His command, which is the command of love, "Take up thy Cross and follow Me." We dare not forget His Kingly office, or the words which He, the King of Love, has uttered—

"He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

"He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it."

Read carefully the closing words of the Epistle.

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

"By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh;

"And having an High Priest over the house of God;

"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised;)

"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

Easter Even

The Collect.—Grant, O Lord, that as we are baptized into the death of Thy blessed Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, so by continual mortifying our corrupt affections we may be buried with Him ; and that through the grave, and gate of death, we may pass to our joyful resurrection ; for His merits, Who died, and was buried, and rose again for us, Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—1 St. Peter iii. 17. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. xxvii. 57.

“Good Friday and Easter Even have always been distinguished from the rest of the days of the year by the fact that no celebration of the Eucharist took place on them : the Church fasted because the Bridegroom was taken away.”

“The last day of the Great Week, called Easter Even, was a fast-day of the universal Church. It is kept holy in memory of Christ’s resting in the grave, and of His descent into hell. No services were held on the day itself according to old custom, but with the beginning of the Easter Vigil the liturgical activity recommenced. However, the custom grew up in the early middle age of anticipating the Easter Vigil, and so its services came to be looked upon as those of Easter Even.

“The Prayer Book has deserted the customs of antiquity and has provided special services for this day, but taken no

account of the Easter Vigil. The Collect first appears in the Scotch Book, and after much alteration was inserted here in 1661. The Epistle and Gospel are newly selected with reference to the events of the day.”¹

The Collect contains a reference to the primitive custom of the Church in the administration of Holy Baptism as part of the services of the Easter Vigil; “as we are baptized into the death of Thy Blessed Son.” “Buried with Him by baptism into death” is the expression of St. Paul (Rom. vi. 4).

Death, as we have seen, was connected with the Sin-offering: death was the fulfilment of the penalty of sin, the penalty paid in full by Christ, the Sin-bearer, as the representative of man.

If we would be sharers in His life we must be partakers of His death. In Baptism there is a mystical death, as is more plainly witnessed when immersion is used. The baptized person is plunged beneath the water, and so typically dies, then rises from the water to newness of life in Christ.

Compare the expression in the baptismal office, “that as He died, and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness.”

And as He, our Master and our Head, was to bear for all eternity the marks of His Passion, the Five Sacred Wounds, so are we “by continual mortifying our corrupt affections,” by the imprinting of the Cross upon our lives, to be made continually sharers in His death.

¹ “A New History of the Book of Common Prayer.” Procter and Frere. 1901.

"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

"For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh."

Before our Easter Communion we have to make a great effort of mortification. We have to voluntarily unite ourselves with our Saviour's death; to lay down in a good Confession, as in a tomb, the sins whereof "our conscience is afraid," that being "dead indeed unto sin," we may pass through the grave and gate of that death, to a joyful union with His Risen Life.

"Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience."

But the Collect looks on to the very end. The death of the body, which our Master Himself endured, awaits us all; and our prayer is that we too, sharers in spiritual death and in the spiritual life to which, through union with Him, we have been admitted, may pass through the grave and gate of bodily death, illumined by His Presence, to our joyful resurrection and eternal union with Him.

How should we have dared to die, if Jesus had not passed before us into that unseen world which is beyond? How could we have watched our loved ones pass through the dread portals if He had not first entered in and "tasted death for every man"? With what hope should we have looked forward to a future beyond the grave, if He had not "broken the yoke and burst the bands" of death?

"I am He that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

“Alive for evermore.” To be met with all the powers of His Risen Life, in our communion of Easter Day; to be met with all His power over death and hell, when our soul leaves the body and passes into the world unseen.

“Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift.”

In the Gospel we have the narrative of events from the evening of Good Friday. In our meditations we shall have dwelt upon the effect, upon different beholders, of the Death of Jesus.

- (i.) The centurion, who glorified God, saying, “certainly this was a righteous Man.”
- (ii.) “All the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote upon their breasts, and returned.”
- (iii.) “And all His acquaintance, and the women that followed Him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.”

What food for meditation each of these three records provides.

Then followed the piercing of the Sacred Side, and the testimony to the reality of the death endured.

“They shall look upon Him Whom they have pierced.”

“When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus’ disciple. He went to Pilate, and begged the Body of Jesus.”

Note the devotion to the Sacred Body of the Lord; He “begged the Body of Jesus.” That was the Body in death; we welcome and look forward to receive the Body in its Risen Life.

“And when Joseph had taken the Body, he wrapped It

- (a) in a clean linen cloth,
- (b) and laid It in his own new tomb,
- (c) which he had hewn out in the rock ;
- (d) and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre.”

Surely we can make these points in our preparation for our communion.

As we go to receive the Precious Body of our Lord, the heart and life must be pure and clean, fitted for the reception of so sacred a Presence. “The fine linen is the righteousness of saints.”

It is received into the place of death—we have resolved to die to the past, to be indeed “dead unto sin”; and into the “new tomb,” hewn out of the stony rock of our hard heart, we purpose to receive the Sacred Body of our Lord.

There must be, too, the great stone of our steadfast resolution rolled to the door of the sepulchre that nought may enter in to disturb, and none may steal away, the Sacred Gift received.

“And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.” The sinner to whom much had been forgiven loved much; and love caused her to watch by the resting-place of the Body of her Lord.

Conscious of past sin, conscious of the power of redeeming love manifested in us, shall not we who have watched our Master die, and in whom His Holy Spirit has kindled a devotion to His Holy Sacrament, like Mary, come very early, on the morn of Easter, with the “sweet spices” of our repentance and devotion, to do honour to the Sacred Body of our Lord?

The Epistle takes us away from earthly scenes, and leads us to follow the Soul of Jesus as it passed into the world unseen, still full of gracious activities.

It is St. Peter who writes, the Apostle who denied, who repented, and who, as he had been an eye-witness to the death of his Lord, was also one of the first witnesses to His Resurrection. “He went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie.”

“Christ also,” he says, “hath once suffered for sins”—as our Sin-offering—“the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.”

“St. Peter in using the word *πνεῦμα* is not speaking of the Holy Spirit, but is speaking of the action of Christ’s Human Spirit, when it departed from His Human Flesh at His death upon the Cross.”

“By (or in) which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison.”

“His Human Spirit, being liberated by death from the burden of the flesh, acquired new life by death: it went forth on a journey; it travelled on a blessed mission to the region of departed spirits, and entered the place where they were detained in prison.”

“Wherever Christ goes, whether on earth, or under the earth, or in heaven, He carries blessings with Him. He fills all things with His love. He suffers, and conquers by suffering. He dies, and lives by death, and brings eternal life to others, and everlasting glory to Himself.”¹

Dwell upon the revelation which the words of St. Peter convey. The Human Spirit of Christ was not impaired by death: our human spirits, the spirits of those we love and who have left us, they too shall live unimpaired by passage

¹ Wordsworth.

through the grave and gate of death. Nay, more; as His Spirit was "quickened" by death, so too shall our spirits acquire new life by death.

That unseen world became the scene of the loving ministrations of the Redeemer of mankind: it is so still. "The souls of the righteous are in the Hand of God." Christ is the Lord of the quick and of the dead; to both alike He ministers that all may be brought to the glory of His resurrection.

"He hath tasted death for every man." He hath illumined with His Presence the place of departed souls. Death has been despoiled of its terrors, the grave has become to us a passage of peace, and a gate of light and joy.

"Them also which sleep in Jesus shall God bring with Him."

"I am the Resurrection and the Life."

"Because I live, ye shall live also."

"I believe in the Resurrection of the dead, And the life of the world to come."

Think what Easter means: the pledge of our resurrection and the resurrection of all we love, the pledge of eternal union with our Lord, and in Him of union with all our dead, no longer dead, but alive with newness of life.

It is our last day of preparation for Easter, for our meeting with the Lord of all, "in whom all spirits live."

The Cross and the Death: the Voluntary offering and the Sin-offering: the Grave, and the life of the Soul in its activities in the world beyond the grave. All this we have seen: how are the thoughts to affect our preparation, and our approach to Him Who has burst the bars of death, and

Who to-morrow will meet us with His Words of welcome—
“All hail”?

The Cross,—have we printed, stamped it, upon our lives,
our wills, our affections, our desires?

The Blood of the Cross, has it fallen “gently on us drop
by drop,” as we knelt before the Cross in penitence, and
at the sacrifice of our own inclination and at the cost of
bitter shame, made our confession in the Sacrament of
Penance?

“We indeed justly.” Have we in the true spirit of
penitence been willing not only to make the confession, but
to accept the penance which our sins demand, to make
such reparation to man as is in our power, to offer to God
such a lifelong spirit of penitence as is due?

Death. He died for me; “Greater love hath no man
than this that a man lay down his life for his friends.”
Have I nailed my sins with my Saviour to the Tree, buried
them in the deep ocean of His Precious Blood, and through
a mystic death acquired new powers of life? “In Christ
shall all be made alive.”

Ah, what love ought I to bring to Him, Who has sought
my soul even when fast bound in the prison-house of sin!
It is to the activities of His Love that I owe my redemption
and my freedom; it is His power which has set free my
soul; it is to His grace I owe it that I, a risen soul, shall
go forth, loosed from the grave-clothes of sin, to meet my
Risen Lord to-morrow.

And in meeting Him, to meet those I loved, who, passing
from my sight, have fallen asleep in Him.

As I draw near to the Altar on Easter Day, as the great
Sacrifice for the quick and dead is presented before the
Throne of the Father, and the Eternal Son pleads His
perfected Offering, heaven and earth seem joined in the

radiancy of the Sun of Righteousness, risen “with healing in His wings.”

There is no longer separation. True, the forms I loved no longer kneel with me; true, I hear not the murmur of their praises and their prayers; true, I no longer see their welcome of devotion as they receive the Precious Body of the Lord. But one with Christ I am one with them: my prayers and their prayers meet and blend in a common devotion to the Sacred Humanity of Jesus. For a few brief moments the veil seems rent asunder and I have the foretaste of that which shall be,—the eternal Communion with Jesus, the endless fellowship with the souls of His redeemed.

Once more before that Easter Communion—

(i.) Say Psalm li., in truest penitence for all sins against His Sacraments and His love, for all past unwillingness to serve, all past denials, all past forsakings of the Lord.

(ii.) Say Psalm cxxx. for all the faithful departed, with

“Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,
And light perpetual shine upon them.”

“Come ever with earnest prayers for them, and specially when the Lord’s death is shown forth until He come.

“Come with a charity wide as the outstretched Arms upon the Cross.

“Come praying for your own dead indeed—maybe we were not kind enough to them, maybe we did not do all we might for them in body and soul—are they quite beyond our reach? Ah no, reach out heart and

prayer for them to the Lord of the living and the dead.”¹

- (iii.) Say Psalm lvii. in anticipation of the Coming of your Risen Saviour, and in expression of your joy in greeting Him.

“Awake up, my Glory: I myself will awake right early.”

¹ “The Peace of the City of Captives.” A Sermon by Rev. L. Alison.

Monday in Easter Week

The Collect.—Almighty God, Who through Thy only-begotten Son Jesus Christ hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life; We humbly beseech Thee, that, as by Thy special grace preventing us Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

The Epistle.—Acts x. 34. *The Gospel.*—St. Luke xxiv.

13.

“The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.”

In the Epistle we have the witness of Simon Peter himself to the Divinity of our Blessed Lord—“He is Lord of all”—and to the truth of His Resurrection.

“We are witnesses,” he says, “of all things which He did, both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem.” He had been a witness, he implies, to the descent of the Holy Ghost after the Baptism of our Lord by St. John the Baptist; he had been a witness of the Crucifixion, when the Jews “slew and hanged upon a tree” the Master Whom he had denied.

“Him God raised up the third day, and shewed Him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead.”

What scenes must have passed before the mind of St. Peter as he spoke the words : the appearance of the Lord in the Upper Chamber, when the doors were shut ; the confirmation of the faith of St. Thomas ; the draught of fishes and the appearance of the Lord on the shore of the Sea of Galilee ; the searching look and the searching words addressed to himself—“ Lovest thou Me ? ”—his restoration, and the charge addressed to him, “ Feed My sheep ; Feed My Lambs.”

“ He commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His Name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.”

St. Peter’s words seem almost a condensation of part of the Apostles’ Creed—

“ I believe in Jesus Christ His Only Son our Lord, Who was crucified, dead, and buried ; the third day He rose again from the dead ; He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the forgiveness of sins.”

In obedience to the commission which he had received, St. Peter was preaching to the Gentiles, and these doctrines of the Christian faith, these facts of which he himself had been an eye-witness, form the foundation of his address.

It is on the fact of the Resurrection and on the fact of the Risen Life of Jesus his Master, on His Divine power and authority, to be manifested hereafter in the final Judgment, that he insists. And in addition to his own personal evidence he brings forward the witness of the Jewish Scriptures—“ to Him give all the prophets witness.”

The Gospel contains a story of the first Easter Day

which is almost unsurpassed in the beauty and simplicity of its diction, and in the revelation which it conveys of the Personal love of the Risen Lord for His followers.

He, "the Lord of all," becomes a Pilgrim that He may share the journey of His pilgrim brethren, whose faith is so often weak and confused, and whose eyes are so often holden ; willing still to walk with them in the way, while in patient love he opens their understanding and brings illumination to their eyes.

The two disciples are on their road to Emmaus, and on the way "they talked together of all these things which had happened."

Think of "these things," which formed the subject of their conversation, things which can never be too frequently in the minds of all the pilgrims of Jesus—the Passion, the Crucifixion, the open Tomb ! Why is it that we are so little inclined to speak on such subjects even to those whom we love the best ? Why is it that they are subjects to be kept for the sick-bed, and for the approach of death, for the end, and not for the period, of the pilgrimage ?

"While they communed together, and reasoned,
Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them."

"The love of Jesus what it is,
None but His loved ones know."

In spite of their doubts, or rather perhaps because of their doubts and fears, He Who loved them drew near and walked with them in the way ; He willed to probe their hearts, to explain their difficulties, to enlighten their souls, and to do so became their Companion and their Guide. "But their eyes were holden, that they should not know Him."

They tell Him of their sadness, and the disappointment

of their imperfect hope and faith. "Jesus of Nazareth" was to them "a Prophet mighty in word and deed," and by "the chief priests and our rulers" had been delivered up to death upon the Cross.

"But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." The old thought of an earthly kingdom, and of deliverance from Roman bondage, seems still to have lingered in their minds.

Still, though their Master's words had not been forgotten, they could not believe that they had been fulfilled. "To-day is the third day since these things were done."

They had heard of the "Vision of Angels," and of the witness of those who had seen the empty Tomb, but they could not accept the truth of the Risen Life, because "Him they saw not."

And then, having listened to all their difficulties,—or may we not say, noted the longing for Himself of which their words gave evidence?—the Master unfolds to them the truth concerning Himself, going further back than the immediate evidence of those to whose witness they had referred, and founding His teaching upon those prophets of the Jewish Scriptures to whom St. Peter in the Epistle refers.

"O fools, and slow of heart to believe (in or after) all that the prophets have spoken! Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory." (R.V.)

"And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." (R.V.)

At the present day it is well that we should dwell upon this instruction, based upon the Old Testament revelation, given by the Son of God Himself, as to His Own Being, His Mission, His Resurrection and subsequent entrance into glory—the chief Articles of the Creed.

"Ye search the Scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have Eternal life ; and these are they which bear witness of Me." So the Lord said in the days of His Ministry, and now after His Resurrection He appeals to the witness of those Scriptures in confirming the faith of His doubting disciples.

"And they drew nigh unto the village whither they went ; and He made as though He would have gone further."

"When Jesus made as if He would continue His journey it was not a mere feint. He would really have gone, but for the sort of constraint which they exercised over Him. Every gift of God is an invitation to claim a greater. But most men stop very quickly on this way ; and thus they never reach the full blessing."¹

"They constrained Him, saying, Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them."

The response follows so quickly upon the constraint. "Abide with us," they say, and at once "He went in to tarry with them."

Is it not one of the defects of our communions that we are so backward in the exercise of that loving constraint ?

The Divine Pilgrim meets us and speaks to our souls ; but in our self-confidence and the dulness of our love we go forth from the Holy Eucharist with little thought of the necessity of keeping His abiding Presence with us. He is willing to tarry with us, but so much depends upon our loving constraint.

"Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." Who knows how near may be the evening of

¹ Godet.

life, how far the short day may be spent? Our only safety is daily, hourly to pray "Abide with us," to live in the conscious remembrance of His Presence. "When day's shadows lengthen," then the words begin to come home with a fuller meaning to our souls.

We have seen others pass into the unseen world in perfect confidence in the abiding Presence of their Redeemer, and in a sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection, but we do not ourselves seem as yet to have learnt the secret of that confidence.

Can we find the reason? Does it not lie in the imperfection of our Communions, the want of care after our approach to, or reception of, the Blessed Sacrament, the forgetfulness of the Presence of our Lord in the discharge of our daily duties and occupations? A sense of the spiritual and the supernatural is not the acquisition of a few short hours of weakness; it has to be trained and cultivated in the days of full strength of heart and mind.

"It came to pass as He sat at meat with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened and they knew Him, and He vanished out of their sight."

"Did not our hearts burn within us," they said, "while He talked with us in the way?" and this burning of the heart was the preparation for that fuller enlightenment when, in the breaking of the bread, they recognised their Lord.

Blessed are they whose hearts have burned with compunction, with love and devotion, as their Lord communed with them in their meditations and preparations for the Holy Eucharist. Only by a faith deepened and quickened by such converse can we hope that our eyes shall be

opened, and that even now, by faith, we may behold the King in the beauty of His Humility in the Feast which He has made ready for us.

Faith in the Resurrection is closely united with our faith in the Blessed Sacrament. "The Lord is risen indeed" is the Easter message, and because He is risen and lives for evermore, therefore is He present with us, in all the power of His Risen Life, in the Holy Eucharist ; and therefore may we hope to live in a reality of union with Him now, and in eternal communion in that world to which He has entered, and for which He is ever seeking to prepare us.

In that Land, in the Kingdom of the Resurrection, the endless theme will be, what "things were done in the way," all the loving dealings of the Divine Pilgrim with our souls ; and how he was known of us—dimly, faintly, imperfectly, it may have been, but still *known*—in the Breaking of the Bread.

The Collect bears closely upon what we have been thinking of. Almighty God through His Only-Begotten Son has overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life, and it is for us, as pilgrims, to be pressing onwards towards the goal.

He it is who puts the good desires into our minds, bringing to our recollection the words and acts and promises of His Blessed Son ; but it is only by His continual help, by His abiding Presence in our souls, the consequence of our constraining effort, that those desires can be brought to good effect.

He is willing to inspire and to help continually : so much depends upon the preparation of our hearts to

accept His inspiration, and our consciousness of our need of a Presence Mighty to save.

We draw near to the Risen Lord. We have so much to learn from the story of those who were called to be the witnesses to His Resurrection. We have so much to think and to speak of as we consider His personal dealings with us in the way of our lives.

We came to His Altar yesterday, and we need even to re-examine ourselves as to our preparation and our approach to that great communion. Perhaps we were distracted—we often are by the numbers approaching with us—and we felt more cold, more loveless, than we had hoped to be. Others perhaps told us of Angel-voices which seemed to speak to them, but we heard none, and seemed hardly able to realise the Presence of our Lord—Him we saw not.

He draws near to us again to-day ; He reads our thoughts ; He draws out our confidence and our desires, and by His loving dealing our faith is made strong and our eyes are opened, so that we know him with a more perfect knowledge.

We sorrow for anything which has been amiss in us, for any carelessness or neglect of which we feel ourselves to have been guilty ; while at the same time we render thanks for the good desires which we are conscious have been, and are, forming in our minds, and ask Him still to walk with us, and to bring them to good effect.

He has “gone about doing good” to our poor sin-laden souls in the past. He has healed us who were oppressed of the devil ; therefore may we trust Him to perfect the good work begun, and therefore, trusting only to His grace, may we resolve to be witnesses in our lives to His Resurrection power and love.

In Preparation—

“The Lord has chastened and corrected me ; but He hath not given me over unto death.”

“Open me the gates of righteousness : that I may go into them, and give thanks unto the Lord.”¹

In Communion—

“Who is like unto the Lord our God, that hath His dwelling so high, and yet humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven and earth ?”

“He taketh the simple out of the dust ; and lifteth the poor out of the mire.”¹

In Thanksgiving—

“Thou art my God, and I will thank Thee : Thou art my God, and I will praise Thee.”

“O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is gracious ; and His mercy endureth for ever.”¹

Aspiration—

“Abide with us, for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent.”

¹ From the Psalms for Easter Day.

Tuesday in Easter Week

The Collect.—Almighty God, Who through Thy only-begotten Son Jesus Christ hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life; We humbly beseech Thee, that, as by Thy special grace preventing us Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect: through Jesus Christ our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

The Epistle.—Acts xiii. 26. *The Gospel.*—St. Luke xxiv. 36.

Our thoughts are still with our Easter Communion, for which we had through Lent been preparing, and with the “good desires” which the Holy Spirit of God has been forming within our minds. There is such intense responsibility consequent upon that communion, those desires, and our subsequent resolutions.

It is one thing to be conscious of good desires, under the poignancy of our penitence and the joy of our absolution; it is another thing to carry out to good effect the determination, which at the moment seemed so resolute.

There is always the danger of reaction. We thought because we felt changed the world would be changed but only too soon we find it just the same. Our faith is no less, but yet we are troubled, troubled because of the recurrence of temptations; troubled, perhaps, because we do

not feel quite as assured of ourselves as we had hoped ; troubled because our Lord does not seem quite as near to us as when we made our Easter Communion.

The Church is wise in giving us the same prayer to say, reminding us of that help which is continual, and which is continually ready, and continually able, to bring the good desires inspired to good effect.

It was in the midst of those who were exposed to the same trials, the same weaknesses, the same mental conflict as ourselves that Jesus appeared, and “ saith unto them, Peace be unto you.”

It was the Resurrection message, the Peace which is the consequence of the Presence of the Lord of Life and Glory. He had the right to use the word, for He had conquered Death and Hell ; He is Lord and King, and His Kingdom is the Kingdom of everlasting peace. No foe can mar the perfection of that peace, for no enemy can stand before the power of His Risen Life.

“ Peace,” He had said, “ I leave with you, My peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you.”

But at first, through want of faith in the reality of His Risen Life, the disciples were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.

“ And He said unto them, Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My Hands and My Feet, that it is I Myself.”

They are the very words which He seems to speak to our souls when through imperfect faith or a possibly natural fear, we are troubled and allow thoughts to arise in our hearts. “ It is I,” He says to us, “ be not afraid.” “ Peace be with you,” the Peace which I alone can give, because I

alone have won the right to bestow it ; the Peace of My abiding Presence.

“ Then were the disciples glad,” St. John tells us, “ when they saw the Lord ; ” a gladness into which we in some measure enter when we realise in successive Eucharists the Presence of the Risen Saviour.

And yet “ they believed not for joy, and wondered.” Who has not experienced the feeling ? Our joy in the consciousness of a good confession made, in the belief that He has made peace for us through the Blood of His Cross, that He is “ our peace, Who hath made both one ; ” our joy in our approach to His loved Presence on Easter Day, in His welcome to us, His words of peace, His admission of us poor sinners into communion with Himself.

Ah, who shall describe the mysteries, the depths of the joy of faithful souls consequent upon that communion ? We think of the joy of Mary Magdalene, of Simon Peter, of all true penitents in their meeting with the Lord : we give thanks if we have at least known *something* of that joy of which they must have known so much.

And our wonder has been so great ; the wonder and the joy combined have almost dimmed the realisation. To think that after all that I confessed, after all the sins both of omission and of commission of which I had been guilty, my Lord should still, not only invite me to draw near to His Presence, but should allow me to receive His Precious Body and Blood, and should even speak words of tenderness and peace to my soul—it surpasses all belief.

Mark the tender forbearance and condescension of Christ’s dealing with His disciples. He recognises the depths as well as the effect of their joy, and graciously gives them proofs of the reality of His Risen Life. He had

"shewed them His Hands and His Feet," and now He takes of that which they offer, "a piece of broiled fish, and of an honeycomb, and did eat before them."

Then having confirmed their faith, He proceeds to instruct their understanding, "that they might understand the Scriptures," proving to them, as He had done to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, that "thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day."

He reminds them that while He was yet with them, in the days of His Ministry, He had taught them—though they had failed to grasp His meaning—that "all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me."

How this twice repeated instruction of the Lord to His disciples on the first Easter Day, as to the witness of the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets to Himself, should make us resolve to study with fresh zeal and fresh prayer for illumination, those Scriptures which, in this generation, so many neglect, but which were the hope and stay of so many faithful souls now at rest.

"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things."

Repentance and remission of sins through the Precious Blood have been preached to us; we have been admitted into the fellowship of the Holy Name; we have learnt the truths of the Incarnation, the Precious Death, the Resurrection; we have experienced the grace of the Sacraments instituted by the Lord Himself. It is for us to be "witnesses of these things"; to bear witness in our own risen lives of "the power of an endless Life"; to be true in life and faith and devotion to Him "Who for us men, and for

our salvation, came down from heaven, and was made MAN."

The Epistle contains a portion of the sermon preached in the synagogue at Antioch by St. Paul, who, being in himself a witness to the power of the Risen Life of Jesus, bears testimony before the Jews as to the claims of His Master to be the promised Messiah and King.

Following the command of His Master he, like St. Peter, bases his argument upon the teaching of the Scriptures, and traces the natural descent of Christ to David. "Of this man's seed hath God according to His promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus."

"To you," he says, "is the word of this salvation sent. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew Him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning Him." Note the cause of the ignorance of the Jews and their rulers. They had the witness of the Scriptures, but they had, through blindness, failed to recognise Him in Whom those Scriptures were fulfilled.

"He was crucified, dead, and buried," is the summary of St. Paul's witness. "But God raised Him from the dead."

The Resurrection is the central fact of his teaching, and of this fact he gives the evidence of those by whom "He was seen many days" after He rose from the dead.

Again from the Scriptures, the Psalms especially, he brings forward evidence in proof of the Divine Sonship and of the Eternal Life of the Son of God. "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee." "Thou shalt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." "He Whom God raised again saw no corruption."

"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. Beware therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets ; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish : for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you."

Because "this Man" has risen from the dead, because He lives at the Right Hand of the Eternal Majesty for evermore, therefore has He power and right both to bestow upon His people pardon and peace, and to communicate to them through divinely appointed means the powers of His Own Risen Life ; and therefore may we in confidence "look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come."

There seem to be three great subjects thus bound up with the teaching of the Easter Festival.

I. The study of the Holy Scriptures.

It cannot be without meaning,

(a) That our Lord Himself should on the day of His Resurrection have placed such stress, and founded the earliest of His final instructions, upon the witness of the Old Testament ; or

(b) That two of the greatest of the Apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, when called upon to address Jews and Gentiles, should equally have based their Master's claims to universal acceptance as the Saviour of the world, upon the prophetic utterances of those same Scriptures.

II. The reality of the Resurrection.

Of this our Lord Himself gave evidence, as narrated

in the Gospel for to-day, and to this the Apostles bear, as personal eye-witnesses, the clearest testimony. Upon faith in the Resurrection depends faith in the life-giving Sacraments of the Church of Christ.

“If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.” “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.”

If Christ rose not from the dead, whence shall come that “remission of sins” of which Christ speaks, and for which we have longed?

If Christ rose not from the dead, whence could we look for the word of peace amidst the difficulties of life, the troubles which terrify, and the doubts which beset us?

“If Christ be not raised—then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.”

“But now is Christ raised from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.”

“Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

III. Faith in the Sacraments.

It is because Jesus rose, and because He ever lives to make intercession for us; it is because He is able to say “I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore;” that we, drawing near to His Altar with humble faith and adoring love, may there believe that we find His Presence, and that we shall receive, through union with His Life, the powers and the graces which our poor, weak, and weary souls so sorely need and greatly desire.

“Peace be unto you.” It is the very message which we long for. “In the world” there is, as He has warned us, tribulation, “but be of good cheer, *I* have overcome the world.”

O Saviour, grant me Thy peace, the peace which follows upon victory, the victory which I long for, over self, the world, my doubts, my fears, my faithlessness.

“In Me ye might have peace.” O Saviour, let me hide myself in Thy Wounded Side, that there I may find the peace of security, the peace of rest and of union with Thee.

O Lord, open Thou mine eyes, that I may *know* Thee in the Blessed Sacrament of Thy Love; open Thou mine ears that I may hear Thy gracious Voice speaking to my soul, calling me by my name, and reminding me of all Thy gracious words and gracious dealings with me in the past,—“these are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you.”

“I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.”

“Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.”

Then shall “the Peace of God” which “passeth all understanding” rest upon our souls, and we may hope to go forth from the Easter Festival to be “witnesses” to the Risen Life of Jesus our Redeemer.

In Preparation—

Pray for true sorrow for past want of love for Jesus; for neglect of those Scriptures which reveal Him, and for consequent want of a lively faith in the power of His Resurrection.

In Communion—

Pray for the grace of illuminating faith, that you may believe fully in the Presence of Jesus “in the midst” of His Church.

In *Thanksgiving*—

Pray earnestly that the Peace of God may indeed keep your heart and mind in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord ; and that the peace of your communion may be the prelude and preparation for the peace which is eternal in the Presence of the Lord.

The Ascension Day

The Collect.—Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that like as we do believe Thy only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens; so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, One God, world without end. Amen.

The Epistle.—Acts i. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. Mark xvi. 14.

Ascension Day completes and consummates the record of the life work of Jesus our Redeemer.

The act of Ascension Day opened the gate of everlasting life to those whom He had redeemed.

The Church, by the appointment of special Psalms and Lessons, and by assigning to it, as evidenced by the Proper Preface, an Octave, places the festival in the same rank as Christmas, Easter, and Whitsunday.

Since Christmas we have passed through the cycle of events connected with the redeeming work of Christ our Lord. Ascension Day is the crown.

“Thou madest Him a little lower than the angels ;
Thou crownedst Him with glory and honour.”

Bethlehem, Nazareth, Calvary, witnessed to His Humiliation. To-day the open gates of heaven, the songs of angels, witness to His glory.

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors: and the King of Glory shall come in."

"Who is the King of Glory? It is the Lord strong and mighty, even the Lord mighty in battle."

The battle for Him is over; He has conquered sin and death. Now is His triumph manifested, now does He enter into the glory of His Kingdom.

Jesus in His glory is the object of our adoration. Jesus, Perfect Man, as witnessed to by the events of Christmas, Lent, and the sufferings of the Holy Week; Perfect God, as witnessed to by the events of Easter and to-day.

The joy of the Ascension to be our leading thought.

"They returned to Jerusalem with great joy."

Note the strangeness of the contrast between the despondency of the disciples after the Resurrection, and their joy after the Ascension.

The Gospel tells us of our Lord's appearance to the eleven Apostles, and of His upbraiding them with their unbelief and hardness of heart.

And yet, after the Ascension, after He has parted from them into heaven, "they returned to Jerusalem with great joy." Why?

The answer is contained in the preceding words, "they worshipped Him." The verb, "to prostrate oneself," in this context, can mean only the adoration which is paid to a Divine Being.

And the reason of the change in the attitude of the Apostles, the reason of their worship and their joy, was their quickened faith.

He Who was taken from them was One Whom they now knew they could worship; not one snatched away by death, but a Master exalted to greater power than He possessed

before ; their Lord still, but their Lord Whom they would henceforth recognise as their Advocate with the Father ; their Lord in Whom were fulfilled His own words, “ All power is given unto Me *in heaven* and in earth.”

We notice how faith is the predominant word in the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel for the day.

“ Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that like as we do *believe* Thy Only-Begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens ; ” the subsequent petition is built upon the foundation of our faith in the Ascension of the Divine Son.

In the Epistle we read of the training of the Apostles by the Risen Lord during the great Forty Days ; “ to whom,” we read, “ He shewed Himself alive after His Passion, by many infallible proofs.”

It was by this training, and by the infallible proofs, that the faith which before was weak was confirmed and quickened, so that they were able to worship Him, and in worshipping to rejoice in His Ascension.

In the Gospel, “ Jesus appeared unto the Eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen.”

They were to go forth and preach the Gospel ; “ He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (“ He that disbelieveth shall be condemned.” R.V.)

Faith in revealed truth, in the mysteries of the Incarnate Life, in the Nature, Human and Divine, of our Blessed Lord, in His Session at the Right Hand of God, as well as in His relationship to ourselves, is the foundation of the life of spiritual work and witness.

The Collect speaks not merely of faith in a past event, but of the effect of faith on our lives in the present.

We do believe that Christ has ascended ; and because of our love and devotion to Him our hearts can no longer be bound to earth, they rise on the wings of love to that place where He dwells.

And more, our minds follow Him also. We give to Him not only the love of our hearts but the homage of our intellectual powers, illumined by faith.

“In heart and mind” we ascend with Him, and “with Him continually dwell.”

What a picture of the true inward life of the follower of Christ.

Living on earth, but dwelling always in spirit with the Ascended Lord. “Where your treasure is there shall your heart be also.”

The trials of earth—what a different aspect they assume, when viewed from the heavenly standpoint. “I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the Right Hand of God.”

The duties of earth—how differently performed, when done by one who is living in loving, conscious union with Christ in heaven.

Note how the petition of the Collect breathes the very spirit of the Apostle.

Religion is devotion to a Person, not mere obedience to a code, or acknowledgment of the truth of certain facts.

“To me to live is Christ.”

“When Christ Who is our life shall appear.”

“I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.”

Consequently life becomes an expectation for the return of Him, the Beloved, Who has ascended.

"Our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."

"That the trial of your faith . . . might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

Where do we find such help to lead the life of heavenly citizens, and of expectation, as in the Holy Eucharist? There we worship the heavenly King, there we join in the Angelic Song before the Throne, there we ascend into living union with the Great High Priest.

Attendance at the Eucharist is the true preparation for our future meeting with Him. Faith is deepened, longing strengthened, love quickened, as we kneel before the Altar.

The Epistle, while telling us

- (i.) Of the love of Christ in tarrying upon earth for the edification of His Apostles,
- (ii.) Tells us of the gifts which the Church was to receive after His departure:
- (iii.) Of the duty placed upon His Apostles, and subsequently upon all members of the Church, after receipt of that gift—"Ye shall be witnesses unto Me";
- (iv.) Of the fact of the Ascension—"while they beheld, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight";
- (v.) Of the promise of His return—"this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

The Gospel—

- (i.) Contains the Divine Commission, expressing in different form the injunction of the Epistle—
“Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.”
- (ii.) In brief form records the fact of the Ascension—
“He was received up into heaven, and sat on the Right Hand of God.”
- (iii.) Tells of the subsequent life of the Apostles—
“They went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with signs following.”

The note of the Festival is joy, and joy must be the note of your communion.

Picture to yourself the joy of heaven and of the Angelic Host, as the Lord of Heaven and the Angels' King is received into His Kingdom, and sits down at the Right Hand of His Father.

They joy in His joy. They gaze upon the Sacred Wounds, endured not for them but for sinful man; they see in them the signs of His Victory, and they rejoice in the Victor's triumph, and in the vision of the souls which, redeemed by His Blood, shall be inheritors of the Heavenly Kingdom.

If that be their joy, what must ours be, who have been redeemed by Him, ransomed by His Death, given life by His Life, admitted even now, through our fellowship with Him, to walk with Him in heavenly places?

Our King, the King Supreme in heaven and earth, makes the humble Altar His Throne. For Him all suffering is past, all conflict is over; the battle-scars remain, the eternal tokens of the love of the Son of man for His brethren, and

of the victory won on their behalf. In that love He rejoices over those who are the fruits of His victory, those who in humble faith draw near to His Throne and offer to Him the tribute of their joy.

“Therefore with Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of Heaven, we laud and magnify Thy Glorious Name”—that Name by which we know and love Thee, that “Name of sweetness passing measure—Jesus, our Redeemer and our King.”

How thorough, how earnest should our preparation be for our Communion on such a day, that we may be enabled to re-echo the Angels’ Songs, to be partakers of the heavenly Triumph, to joy in the joy of our Lord.

For that is the true joy. It is not that we rejoice in a sense of mercies received and possibilities opened. It is that we are allowed to be partakers in the joy of our Lord.

He rejoices, and admits the Hosts of heaven into His joy; and we, to whom He has opened the kingdom of heaven, we His redeemed, worship before His Altar Throne, and by faith beholding Him at the Right Hand of the Father, rejoice in His Glory and Eternal Majesty.

Our songs and our praises can only be faint echoes of the worship of the unfallen Angels; but at least by preparation, by a good confession, by contemplation of the wonders of His Being and His glory, we can strive to make our offering in some measure worthy of His acceptance. Then may we hope to hear His Voice saying to our souls as we kneel in His Presence, “Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

In Preparation—

“Who shall ascend into the Hill of the Lord; or who shall rise up in His Holy Place?”

"Even he that hath clean hands and a pure heart.
He shall receive the blessing of the Lord."

In *Communion*—

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up,
ye everlasting doors: and the King of Glory shall
come in."

"Who is the King of Glory? Even the Lord of
Hosts, He is the King of Glory."

In *Thanksgiving*—

Pray that being endowed, in your Communion, with
power from on high, you may in humble devotion live
the heavenly life, and in that life bear witness to your
King.

Monday in Whitsun Week

The Collect.—God, Who as at this time didst teach the hearts of Thy faithful people, by the sending to them the light of Thy Holy Spirit ; Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgement in all things, and evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort ; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, One God, world without end. Amen.

The Epistle.—Acts x. 34. *The Gospel.*—St. John iii. 16.

Three days—as at Easter—are set apart, with their special services, for the great Festival of God the Holy Ghost. Greatly do we need to have our souls illuminated by the light of the Holy Spirit that we may comprehend

- I. The dignity of the Person of the Holy Ghost ;
- II. His office in the Church of Christ ;
- III. His relationship to each member of that Church.

I. We need to correct our ideas concerning the Holy Spirit : we are so apt to think of Him merely as an emanation from the Being Whom in our thoughts we call “God,” an influence sent forth by Him to strengthen and to comfort us.

Look at the Creeds.

- (a) The Apostles’ Creed.

“I believe in the Holy Ghost”—a distinct Person, the Third Person of the Ever-Blessed Trinity.

(b) The Nicene Creed.

"I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life. . . .

Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified."

Not only a distinct Person, but "the Lord, and Giver of life," Who is to receive equal honour and worship with the Father and the Son. How seldom we connect the thought of worship with the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity.

(c) The "Confession of our Christian Faith, commonly called the Creed of St. Athanasius."

"The Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all One: the glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal."

"Such as the Father is, such is the Son: and such is the Holy Ghost."

(d) Article V.

"The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of One Substance, Majesty and Glory, with the Father and the Son, Very and Eternal God."

We need to dwell upon such words lest we fail in reverence to Him Whose Festival we are keeping, and fail to realise both the marvels of His Being, and the condescension of His Love.

"Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
And lighten with celestial fire;
Thou the Anointing Spirit art,
Who dost Thy sevenfold gifts impart."

II. His Office in the Church of Christ.

He is the gift of Jesus to the Church which He Himself has founded.

A gift so precious that He said "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you."

A gift on which the very life of the Church depends. He is both the light and the vital principle of the Holy Catholic Church. Remember the Epistle for yesterday.

He is the efficient cause, or agent, in the Sacraments of the Church. Through His Presence and power things earthly acquire a spiritual efficacy which nothing else could impart to them.

"Receive ye the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive they are forgiven ; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained."

"Sanctify this water to the mystical washing away of sin."

"Almighty and everlasting God, Who hast vouchsafed to regenerate these Thy servants by Water and the Holy Ghost : strengthen them, we beseech Thee, O Lord, with the Holy Ghost the Comforter"—followed by the imposition of hands.

In the Holy Eucharist, it is the overshadowing of God the Holy Ghost, and the exercise of His Almighty power, which gives to us the Living Presence of Jesus our Redeemer, and makes it possible for us to listen to those words of wonder—

"The Body, the Blood, of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life."

III. The relationship of God the Holy Ghost to each member of the Church.

Each baptized person is "regenerated by water and the Holy Ghost." There is a Personal action of God the Holy Ghost upon each soul, and each soul becomes the temple of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity.

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

"What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost Which is in you, Which ye have of God?"

In each soul, through participation in the Sacraments of Christ's Church, there is an indwelling Presence of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity.

The Divine Personality is attested by the use of such expressions as "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God," an expression incapable of use with reference to a mere influence.

Consider the marvels of our position in thus being brought individually into such intimate relationship with God the Holy Ghost; the blessedness if we obediently correspond to His Divine motions; the danger and guilt if we rebelliously resist His loving influence.

Of the Collect we have spoken in the Notes¹ for Whitsunday. We pray that as the Holy Spirit by His illumination did teach the hearts of the faithful, so He will extend that light and teaching to us, that we may have

- (a) A right judgment in all things;
- (b) Perpetual joy in His holy comfort.

It is a prayer which when we use it, during the festival and at other seasons, opens out before us fresh fields of wonder, as we contemplate our own needs, and the pro-

¹ Præparatio (Sundays).

vision of grace afforded us in view of those needs, through the operation of God the Holy Ghost.

The Epistle appears to refer to the Office of the Holy Ghost in the Church of Christ, as giving life to the Sacraments, and through the Sacraments to the souls of men.

It contains the record of St. Peter's address to Cornelius the Centurion, and those assembled with him, after the vision vouchsafed to St. Peter, from which he had learnt "That God is no respecter of persons," and that the Gentiles were equally with the Jews to be brought into the fold of the Holy Church.

"While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on them which heard the word"—the first Gentiles to whom the gift of the Holy Spirit had been granted. A gift which excited the wonder of those "of the circumcision"—the Jewish Christians, and which was exceptional as preceding the Sacrament of Baptism.

We have also the record of the subsequent administration, by the command of the Apostle, of the Sacrament of Baptism.

The Holy Gospel refers especially to "that enlightenment by Christ from which the Sacrament of Baptism took one of its most primitive names, that of "Illumination."¹

With it are distinctly connected the words of the Collect, "by the sending to them the light of Thy Holy Spirit."

By the coming of the Son of God "light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

¹ Blunt.

"For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprobated.

"But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

By Baptism we are admitted into the kingdom of light, made children of light, and have, or ought to have, no fellowship with the works of darkness.

The Holy Spirit dwelling in the members of Christ is, to the end of time, their light and illumination, shedding His radiancy upon the path of life, and upon the Person of the Divine Redeemer, and leading them into all truth.

In the light of the Holy Spirit we draw near to the Holy Eucharist during His Festival : we gaze upon the heavenly mysteries, and we see the realities of the Divine Love.

There we behold Him Who, when He instituted that Holy Eucharist in the presence of His disciples, spoke to them so fully (although at the time they must have failed to understand His words) of that Comforter of Whose gifts we also are partakers.

He was preparing them for that which was before them in trial and persecution, when He, their Master, should be taken from them.

It is so still. He is ever in His Omniscient Love preparing His people for the trials of faith and the difficulties of life which He foresees for them. Through the operation of the Holy Spirit He Himself feeds and strengthens them, and renews within them the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, which can alone be to them for wisdom, for knowledge, and for holy fear.

In the light of the Holy Spirit we behold once more the Divine Oblation ; we see the “Lamb as it had been slain” ; we see “Jesus in the midst,” speaking as of old the word of peace, “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

We seem to hear once more the “sound as of a rushing mighty wind,” as the Holy Spirit comes to fill our souls with light, and life, and rapture. We wonder, as we are conscious of His desire and willingness to occupy the temple of our hearts, that we could ever be so cold, so faithless, so unresponsive, so neglectful as we know ourselves to have been.

In Preparation—

“ Come, Thou Holy Paraclete,
And from Thy celestial seat
Send Thy light and brilliancy.”

In Communion—

“ O Thou Light, most pure and blest,
Shine within the inmost breast
Of Thy faithful company.

Fill Thy faithful, who confide
In Thy power to guard and guide,
With Thy sevenfold Mystery.”

In Thanksgiving—

“Pray to have a devotion, personal, constant, daily, to the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. Say, O Holy Spirit of God, take me as Thy disciple, guide me, illuminate me, sanctify me. Be Thou my God, be Thou my Guide: wheresoever Thou leadest me I will go ; whatsoever Thou forbiddest, I will renounce ; and whatsoever Thou commandest, in Thy strength I will do.”¹

¹ Manning, “Internal Mission of the Holy Ghost.”

Tuesday in Whitsun Week

The Collect.—God, Who as at this time didst teach the hearts of Thy faithful people, by the sending to them the light of Thy Holy Spirit; Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgement in all things, and evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, One God, world without end. Amen.

The Epistle.—Acts viii. 14. *The Gospel.*—St. John x. 1.

Still we repeat the same Collect; still we are meditating upon the wonders of the Pentecostal outpouring; and the result of our prayers and meditation is to be an increased, widened devotion to God the Holy Ghost.

The more we meditate the deeper becomes our awe. We cannot even pray, we cannot even hope to meditate, to perform even our ordinary devotions, without the aid of the Holy Ghost.

“And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity; for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” (R.V.)

Well is it that we should be led to pray for the exercise of the “teaching” power of the Holy Spirit of God.

The prolongation of the Whitsun festival is designed to remind us that the work of the Holy Ghost was not for one

set of men, or for the people of one race or of one age. His work is carried on by men who are the successors of the Apostles, on whom He first descended, in the rule and ministry of the Church, and His gifts are extended to people of every race to the end of time.

The Epistle gives us the record of the first administration of the Sacrament of Confirmation to Gentiles who had previously been admitted into the Church by Holy Baptism.

“When the Apostles, which were at Jerusalem, heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John.” Who, after prayer that the gift of the Holy Spirit might be bestowed upon the baptized converts, “laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.”

The like gift have we ourselves received, when we were confirmed by one who was the successor of the Apostles; and for the use of that gift are we responsible to Him Who is the Author and Giver of all good gifts.

In the Gospel, our Blessed Lord represents Himself as, at once, the Good Shepherd—a title so especially dear to the early Christians—and as the Door through which alone the sheep are to obtain admittance to the fold.

“I am the Door; by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”

“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

“Our Blessed Lord uses various metaphors in order that we may know Him to be All in All. He is the Door of the Fold, and the Keeper of the door, as well as the Shepherd of the sheep. He is the Truth, and opens Himself, and reveals to us the Truth.”

The Gospel and the Epistle are most intimately linked together. Christ is the Shepherd, and none but those who are commissioned by Him are true shepherds of His sheep. Every Bishop and Priest who, through the operation of the Spirit, has received the divine grace of Orders, represents Christ in His capacity as Shepherd.

Christ is the Door, and it is only through Him, through the washing of regeneration and sanctification of the Spirit in the Sacrament of Baptism, that each soul is admitted into the fold of His holy Church.

How tender is the picture of our Blessed Lord which His own words convey. "The sheep hear His Voice, and He calleth His Own sheep by name, and leadeth them out."

Think of the personal knowledge possessed by the Good Shepherd of each human soul. May we not believe that the name by which He knows His Own is the name which was bestowed upon each of us when we were made, through the power of the Spirit, "members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven"?

"And when He putteth forth His Own sheep, He goeth before them, and His sheep follow Him; for they know His voice."

Having made the sheep His Own through Holy Baptism, He putteth them forth into the world, where they have to meet the trials, the temptations of this life; where the sun shall burn by day and the heat shall parch, and there shall seem to be no water of refreshment, and no shelter from the heat or storm.

But "He goeth before them." There is no path of trial or suffering in which they may not find the track of His sacred Feet. He was an-hungred, He was athirst, He was weary in the midst of His journey through this sinful world.

And even as He found rest and solace in the solitude of His Father's Presence, so would He have it be with us.

"A Man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest ; as rivers of water in a dry place, as a shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

"He causeth His wind to blow, and the waters flow."

"Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created : and Thou renewest the face of the earth."

How it all speaks of the loving work of Christ, the Good Shepherd, through the operation of the Holy Ghost.

"They know His Voice." That is the mark of the faithful children of Christ. They know, they recognise His voice amid all the distractions, the alluring voices of this world. "They know not the voice of strangers." False teachers, strange doctrine, will they not follow ; they know only the Voice and teaching of their only Master, Jesus Christ.

May we not say that there is a suggestion at the same time of the Good Shepherd's unwearied love in calling, speaking to, His ever wayward sheep ? They *hear* His Voice, but does not our own experience tell us how often we hear, and how often we fail to obey ?

It is in the Holy Eucharist that all the imagery of our Blessed Lord's teaching seems to find for us its most perfect fulfilment. There, in His Sacred Presence, the Good Shepherd gathers His sheep ; there the Lamb of God sets before them the way of life, which is the way of sacrifice ; thence, from the fold of His love, He sends them forth strengthened and refreshed, once more to bear the burden and heat of the day.

But the gifts there received are enduring gifts, because

they are the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He renews in us the gifts and graces of that Holy Spirit ; faith is strengthened, hope renewed, love is quickened, through the power of the Holy Spirit flowing to the soul in living union with its Lord.

There the faithful soul hears the Master's Voice, and knows the Voice which speaks from Calvary. To each the Voice conveys its own command, or its own message. For one He pleads, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." With another He pleads, "Forgive them, your enemies and wrong-doers."

We listen, and in the silence of the holy place we seem to hear the Voice which speaks. "I thirst." He descends to thirst for our love. It is we who really thirst, although we know it not, and He waits to give us from the fountain of His love streams of living water.

"The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

I. Meditate upon the blessedness and responsibility of your position ; admitted into the fold of the Church and into participation in the Sacraments, consider what you thereby owe to the loving work of God the Holy Ghost.

II. Adore the Sacred Presence of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, Whose Voice speaks to thee from the Altar, calling thee to arise and follow Him.

III. Pray that, through the grace received in the Sacraments of Christ, you may be strengthened with the Holy Ghost the Comforter, and that you may receive daily an increase of those gifts which He so lovingly bestows.

St. Andrew's Day

The Collect.—Almighty God, Who didst give such grace unto Thy holy Apostle Saint Andrew, that he readily obeyed the calling of Thy Son Jesus Christ, and followed Him without delay; Grant unto us all, that we, being called by Thy Holy Word, may forthwith give up ourselves obediently to fulfil Thy holy commandments; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Rom. x. 9. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. iv. 18.

St. Andrew, the first called of the Apostles, is the first Saint commemorated in the Christian year. We know only the fact of his call (St. John i. 40-42), and that, having himself been prepared to acknowledge Christ by the teaching of His Forerunner, he became the instrument for bringing his brother, St. Peter, to Jesus.

“He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, we have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus.”

There are three subsequent occasions on which he appears in the Gospels. Once, at the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, as mentioning the presence of the lad with the “five barley loaves and two small fishes”; secondly, as joining with St. Philip in bringing certain Greeks who desired “to see Jesus”; thirdly, as questioning our Lord, in company with St. Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, concerning the coming destruction of Jerusalem.

Perhaps the life and work of St. Andrew may be summed up in the few sentences which record his first meeting with Jesus, and his sympathy with those who desired to see his Master.

"What seek ye? They say unto Him, Rabbi, where dwellest Thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where He dwelt and abode with Him that day."

He sought, and he desired to see. He saw, and henceforth life had for him but one object, to follow and to see with ever increasing clearness; to bring others, in whom the same desire was kindled, to the same Vision, the Vision of the Only-Begotten Son of God.

An intense personal devotion would seem to be the characteristic of his life.

The Gospel which relates the further call to discipleship of St. Andrew and St. Peter (as well as that of St. James and St. John), indicates both the personal allegiance involved in the command, and its influence upon the two brothers—

"Follow Me: and they straightway left their nets, and followed Him."

Whither did St. Andrew follow? To the cross itself. After oft-repeated scourging, he was fastened to a cross,¹ and there left to die.

"Hail, Precious Cross" were his words, "that has been consecrated by the Body of my Lord, and adorned with His Limbs as with rich jewels. I come to thee exulting and glad; receive me with joy into thine arms."

"O good Cross, beloved Cross, deriving thy glory from

¹ The St. Andrew's Cross forms a portion of the national banner of Great Britain.

the touch of my Lord, behold, I come to thee : long have I desired and sought thee ; now thou art found by me, and art made ready for my longing soul. May He receive me by thee, Who for me suffered on thee.”¹

His desire was granted. Through the Cross he attained to the endless vision of his Lord, he beheld His dwelling-place, and abides with Him for ever.

But the Gospel tells us of the characteristics of the present following. Christ, the Exemplar, says, “My Father worketh hitherto, and *I* work.” He who follows Christ must follow in the path of work—“I will make you fishers of men.”

This was to be at once the task and the dignity of the Apostles : they were to be the agents of the Lord Whom they followed, in the evangelisation of the world, in the gathering of souls into the Gospel net.

The words of Christ were the foreshadowing of the great commission—“Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.”

Note the readiness of obedience manifested by St. Andrew—“They *straightway* left their nets, and followed Him ;” repeated in the case of St. James and St. John, who “*immediately* left the ship and their father, and followed Him.”

It is to this readiness of obedience that the Collect calls our attention ;

- (i.) Showing us the sources from whence it springs ;
- (ii.) Marking it as an essential characteristic in the life of the followers of Christ ;
- (iii.) Teaching us the object on which it is to be exercised.

¹ Blunt.

(i.) "Almighty God, Who didst give such grace unto Thy holy Apostle, St. Andrew, that he readily obeyed the calling of Thy Son Jesus Christ." The "preventing" grace of God enabled St. Andrew readily to obey. "It is God Which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

As Christ is ever calling souls to follow Him, so the grace of God is ever working to incline our hearts to obedience, to remove prejudices, and to overcome our natural hesitation.

(ii.) "Grant unto us *all*, that we being called, by Thy Holy Word, may forthwith give up ourselves obediently."

All called? Yes, Christ by His Holy Spirit, at various times and in various ways, calls *all* to follow Him.

We have to pray for grace that we may be enabled "forthwith" to render unto Him obedience.

Contemplate the love of Jesus in "calling" us, we being what we are ; the incessant urgency of His loving call ; the variety of its character ; the blessedness of listening, the danger of neglect.

(iii.) "Obediently to fulfil Thy holy commandments." It is to that we are called, the fulfilment of the commandments of Christ.

What are they? Take but three :—

(a) "Follow Me." It is not left to us a matter of choice or inclination ; it is a direct command.

(b) "Come, take up the cross and follow Me."

(c) "This is My commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." The active love for His brethren which was the characteristic of the Master must be the distinguishing feature of those who follow Him.

Christ never hides from His people that the path by

which they are to follow Him is the Royal Road of the Cross.

"Go where thou wilt, seek whatsoever thou wilt, thou shalt not find a higher way above, nor a safer way below, than the way of the Holy Cross."

"We must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God."

The Epistle appears to refer to that particular form of obedience to which St. Andrew was directly called, and to which we all, as followers of Christ, are called in greater or less degree, according to His will.

"The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him."

"Whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved."

"But—and here comes the important point—"how shall they call on Him in Whom they have not believed?"

"And how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard?"

"And how shall they hear without a preacher?"

"And how shall they preach *except they be sent?*"

It is the will of Christ that the Gospel shall be revealed to all the world, that all shall hear that all may believe. To Jew and to Gentile was the message to be sent by the hands of those, like St. Andrew, whom He had chosen, and to whom he had given His commands. On their obedience rested, humanly speaking, the world's salvation.

It is so still : the command is the same now as then : the call is still the same ; the means are the same—the use

of a human agency to bear witness to the Name and Kingdom of Christ.

Some He calls to special work, special office, special responsibility in the Ministry of the Church ; but to all the call comes, on all the responsibility for the spread of Christ's kingdom rests.

The life of following, the life of cross-bearing in following, the life of charity in its widest, broadest sense, is the true witness, the supreme argument in bringing the souls of men to the Saviour of mankind.

Love for Christ involves love for the souls of those for whom He died. There must be true union with Him in order that there may be true patience in the work to which He calls us in following Him.

“All day long I have stretched forth My Hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.”

He stretched forth His Hands for us, and to us, upon the Cross of Calvary ; have we rendered to Him as yet a full and ungrudging obedience ; have we exhibited a patience learnt of Him in our dealings with the souls of those who as yet know Him not ?

The last words of the Epistle seem to come home to us with a special and personal force, in our preparation for Communion, as we turn back in our Prayer-Books to the services for the Festival of the first-called of the Apostles. “All the day long,” of the past year, we may say, and of all the past years of our lives, has Jesus in the Holy Eucharist “stretched forth His Hands” to us.

He has called us, by the memory and the Presence of His Love, from the allurements of the world to a closer following of, and union with Himself. And we—what has

our answer been? That is the question which we must answer in our preparation.

It is so strange to think of Christ ever calling, ever seeking that we should follow, and of ourselves ever evading the call, putting off obedience, making excuses for delay.

Our want of correspondence to divine grace, of response to the call, does not concern ourselves alone; there have been, there are souls waiting to be influenced by us, towards which we have failed in duty, because we would not "give up ourselves obediently to fulfil" the "holy commandments" of our Lord.

St. Andrew, in following Christ, longed that the multitude who desired to follow also should be fed, even though the provision seemed so small. We now follow the same Master in the Wilderness of this world, hungering and thirsting for that which shall sustain our souls.

Believing in the Communion of Saints, may we not believe in the living sympathy of the Saint and Apostle with us his fellow-servants in Christ? May we not believe in the efficacy of the prayers which he offers before the Throne, that we may be nourished to everlasting life with the Food of the Blessed Sacrament?

In the Holy Eucharist is present the Divine Exemplar. In obedience to His Father's Will He presents His all-perfect Sacrifice, and offers Himself to us as our Heavenly Food.

His Patience, His unceasing tenderness of love, His unwearying desire for the souls of men, are perpetually manifested. The very radiancy of love surrounds the Altar, and we seem to hear, in the silent awe with which we approach the Mercy Seat, the Divine Voice ever speaking—

"As I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

"Follow Me."

"Lord, I will follow Thee," we begin to say, "but—I cannot follow Thee in mine own strength."

"Nay," the Master whispers, "I ask not that of thee. In the Blessed Sacrament thou receivest Me; where I go thou canst go; and where thou goest I will go with thee."

Yes, "my Beloved is mine, and I am His."

In *Preparation*—

To whom dost thou come?

To Christ thy Lord, Who, on the Cross, suffered for thee, leaving thee an example that thou shouldst follow in His steps.

"All the day long have I stretched forth My Hands" to *thee*.

In *Communion*—

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

In *Thanksgiving*—

"Lord, I desire to follow Thee: make me through my union with Thee to be worthy to suffer for Thee."

St. Thomas the Apostle

The Collect.—Almighty and ever-living God, Who for the more confirmation of the faith didst suffer Thy holy Apostle Thomas to be doubtful in Thy Son's Resurrection ; Grant us so perfectly, and without all doubt, to believe in Thy Son Jesus Christ, that our faith in Thy sight may never be reproved. Hear us, O Lord, through the same Jesus Christ, to Whom with Thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for evermore. Amen.

The Epistle.—Eph. ii. 19. *The Gospel.*—St. John xx. 24.

“ By the doubting of St. Thomas,” says St. Gregory, “ we are more confirmed in our belief than by the faith of the other Apostles ; ” words which find their echo in the Collect for the Festival.

Christ patiently bore with the doubt and difficulties of His Apostle, knowing as He did his earnest and loving devotion, and granted to him the assurance which he sought ; thereby winning the perfect utterance of his faith, and affording “ confirmation of the faith ” to those who hereafter should experience the same hesitation as St. Thomas.

There are four utterances of St. Thomas recorded, two before, and two after the Resurrection of our Lord—the latter in the Gospel for to-day.

There is one remarkable feature in these four utterances ;

in each case, one is an expression of doubt, the other of zealous devotion.

(i.) (a) "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest ; and how can we know the way ? "

(b) "Let us also go, that we may die with Him."

(ii.) (a) "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His Side, I will not believe."

(b) "My Lord and my God."

The character was one of strange contradictions, of obstinacy and presumption combined with an impulsive loyalty. Only the long-suffering patience, and the insight of Christ into its complexities, could finally have won the acknowledgment of faith. Possibly the touch of the Sacred Wounds may have healed the Apostle's doubt.

It is well to note the consequences of two of the utterances of St. Thomas.

To (i.) (a) Was granted the revelation of Christ, embodied in His reply—"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life : no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me."

To (ii.) (a) Was granted the test demanded, resulting in the Apostle's testimony both to the Resurrection and to the Divinity of his Master, "My Lord and my God."

The Gospel contains the record of our Lord's second appearance, after His Resurrection, to His assembled Apostles.

St. Thomas, not having been with them on the first occasion, was told "We have seen the Lord." Note the expression as repeated and amplified later by St. Thomas.

He refuses belief, and demands as test the sight and touch of the Sacred Wounds.

"Then"—eight days later—"came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you."

We picture to ourselves the joy, the awe, the renewed faith and courage of the Apostles, as again they see their Master, of Whose death they had been witnesses, standing in their midst.

Death cannot conquer Him, the grave cannot hold Him, the closed doors cannot separate Him from them. On them, once again, He breathes His message of peace—"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you."

We strive to imagine the effect of his Master's Presence upon St. Thomas in his doubt; hesitation must almost have vanished before his Lord personally addressed him.

Consider the intimate knowledge, and then the condescension and tender love of our Lord, in allowing St. Thomas to touch His Sacred Wounds. "Be not faithless, but believing." Rather perhaps, "Become not faithless." Thomas was doubtful, not unbelieving. Our Lord warns us of the danger lest doubts should be hardened into unbelief.¹

From St. Thomas comes the explicit avowal of faith, the result of his Master's action—"My Lord and my God." No longer is it "We have seen the Lord"—Him Whom we saw die, and Whom we recognise as the same Lord and Master—but, "My God." He acknowledges, and bears witness to the Divinity of Jesus: "God of God, Very God of Very God."

"Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

¹ Wordsworth.

Note the repetition of this word "believe" in the last verses of the Gospel, and its echo in the Collect. St. Thomas had said, "I will not *believe* ;" our Lord responds, using his own word, "Be not faithless, but *believing*." "Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast *believed* ; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have *believed*."

"These" signs, says the Evangelist, "are written that ye might *believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that *believing* ye might have life through His Name."

The Collect seizes upon this word. It was for the confirmation of the faith, or belief, that St. Thomas was suffered to be doubtful of the Resurrection of the Son of God.

"Grant us," we say, "so perfectly, and without all doubt, to believe in Thy Son Jesus Christ, that our faith in Thy sight may never be reproved."

Such faith as we pray for must be a faith founded on the confession of St. Thomas, faith in the Deity of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Our Lord Himself accepted the confession of St. Thomas, and on his words founded His own immediate word of blessing : "Thou hast seen and hast believed that I am, as thou sayest, thy Lord and thy God ; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed in Me, according to the words thou hast just uttered."

There can be no paltering with the faith. An Incarnation which is not an Incarnation in the Catholic sense is a fraud and a delusion. If Jesus be not "the Christ, the Son of God," His acceptance of the title of "God," and His blessing pronounced upon those who believe in His Deity, must be regarded either as that which we dare not name, or as the invention of His followers in their endeavour to exalt their Master.

The Collect leaves us in no doubt as to the Catholic Faith—

“Hear us, O Lord, through the same Jesus Christ, to Whom with Thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for evermore.”

“In this Trinity none is afore, or after other: none is greater, or less than another.

“But the whole Three Persons are co-eternal together: and co-equal.

The Epistle tells appropriately of that Holy Church which is “built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets,” of which Jesus Christ Himself is the “Chief Corner-Stone.”

It unfolds to us the grandest possible conception of the Holy Church which, resting upon the sure foundation, Jesus Christ Himself, includes in its catholicity and unity the seen and the unseen, the Church visible and at rest.

The growth of that Church, silent as the building of the Jewish Temple of old, is ever going on. Souls are gathered into the visible Church by the ministry of the successors of the Apostles; the Church invisible is ever being builded, as the souls called by God, upborne above the waters of death by the Wood of the Cross, are safely carried up to Jerusalem, the City of Peace.

“In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

Each stone is “elect and precious” in the sight of the Heavenly Builder. Each stone has to be hewn and moulded in accordance with His design, and its own appointed place. The whole temple—and, as parts of the whole, each individual soul—is designed to become “an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

"Draw near with faith" is the invitation as we kneel before the Altar. Faith in what, in Whom? Faith in the Incarnate Son of God, the Chief Corner-Stone upon Whom the whole fabric is builded; faith in His Resurrection Life, faith in His Sacramental Presence with His members.

The veils of earthly things hide Him, it is true, from our eyes—but "blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed."

Now, "we walk by faith and not by sight," for "yet the vision is for many days:" but "at the time of the end shall be the vision."

"The vision is yet for an appointed time, though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

How often—we shall be obliged to own it if we be true to ourselves—how often are we in reality full of doubts as to the truth of His Presence and His Identity.

"If He were really present, should I not feel differently?" We crave for that which is not promised to us, instead of seeking a more perfect faith.

"If He really knew me and cared for me, as He seems to have done for St. Thomas of old, would He not deal more tenderly with me, remove these difficulties, take away this suffering?"

And as we kneel before the Altar, the Voice speaks still—

"Behold My Wounds, the marks of My self-sacrifice, the tokens of My Love, and be not faithless but believing." "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

"Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you."

It is so still. We draw near to the Holy Eucharist, and

the doors of the temple of our hearts being shut to earthly things, comes Jesus, and standing in the midst, speaks as of old, "Peace be unto you."

Peace, because He lives for evermore. Peace, because He has redeemed us from the power of sin and of the world. Peace, which springs from union with Him, the Prince of Peace. Peace which is only the foretaste of the eternal peace which His loved ones shall enjoy in His Presence.

Without faith there can be no such peace. As faith reveals to us His unseen Presence, as we "feed on Him in our hearts by faith, with thanksgiving," there rises from the inmost depths of our being the supreme confession—"My Lord and my God."

"My Lord; I will follow Thee, trust Thee, obey Thee."

"My God; I will love Thee, worship Thee, adore Thee."

In *Preparation*—

Pray for the grace of a true faith, that you may "perfectly, and without all doubt believe in" God's dear Son, Jesus Christ.

In *Communion*—

Behold Jesus pointing to His Wounds, and bidding thee, like Thomas, to touch them and believe. And thou, at His feet, acknowledge Him thy Lord and God, and give thyself wholly to faith, hope, and love.

In *Thanksgiving*—

Pray for grace that in the strength of your Communion you may be enabled to "die with Him."

The Conversion of St. Paul

The Collect.—O God, Who, through the preaching of the blessed Apostle Saint Paul, hast caused the light of the Gospel to shine throughout the world ; Grant, we beseech thee, that we, having his wonderful conversion in remembrance, may show forth our thankfulness unto Thee for the same, by following the holy doctrine which he taught ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Acts ix. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. xix. 27.

To-day seems to stand alone in the list of Saints' Days, for we commemorate, not the man, but a fact in his life, the fact of his conversion, a fact so momentous that its influence has affected, and still affects, the whole civilised world.

“O God,” we say in the Collect, “Who, through the preaching of the blessed Apostle Saint Paul, hast caused the light of the Gospel to shine throughout the world.”

Such is the effect of the grace of God working in one individual life, and that life the last, humanly speaking, which we should have imagined fitted for such a purpose.

But before he could be the medium through which the light of the Gospel was to shine throughout the world, there must be a change, a turning round in the life ; and it is that change, which we know as his “conversion,” which we commemorate to-day.

For that change, as viewed in its consequences, we give thanks, praying "that we, having his wonderful conversion in remembrance, may show forth our thankfulness to Thee"—the Author of the conversion—"for the same, by following the doctrine which he taught."

There is something noteworthy in that last expression. We do not pray, even as in the Festival of St. John the Baptist, that we may "follow his doctrine and holy life," but simply that we may follow "the holy doctrine which he taught."

The doctrine was the subject-matter of that preaching whereby the light of the Gospel shone throughout the world. The life, as the Gospel will show us, has its lesson and its example, but it is especially "the holy doctrine" to which the Collect calls our attention.

"So long as a man does what is right it does not matter much what he believes," is a too common expression. The life must be founded in faith in the Incarnate Son Whom St. Paul preached, and in those verities, summed up in the Creeds of the Catholic Church, to which he bore witness.

"He preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection."

"Straightway he (Saul) preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God."

"This Jesus Whom I preach unto you is Christ."

"We preach Christ Crucified."

"Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."

"I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread."

These are only fragments of "the holy doctrine" which St. Paul delivered, and which we pray that we, in faith, may follow.

The Epistle presents vividly in few words the attitude of Saul of Tarsus as the persecutor of the followers of Christ. "Breathing out threatenings and slaughter," and acting under a commission from the High Priest, he starts for Damascus, intending to bring bound to Jerusalem "any of this way, whether they were men or women."

The only previous reference to him is found in the account of the death of St. Stephen, where we read "the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul." "And Saul was consenting to his death."

He was therefore a spectator of that triumphant martyrdom, and one of those included in that final prayer, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge"—a circumstance to be remembered in connection with his subsequent conversion.

"As he journeyed, he came *near* Damascus"—in the very crisis of her peril the Church was delivered—"and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven. And he fell to the earth, and heard a Voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"

"This repetition of the name, and the fact that he alone was permitted to see Jesus (compare Acts iv. 17-27; xxii. 14; 1 Cor. xi. 1, and 1 Cor. xv. 8), and to hear His words, while others saw only the light, and heard the sound, showed that the vision was addressed to him."¹

"Me" is emphatic. The sins committed against our neighbour are committed against Christ our Lord: the injuries done to His Church are done to Him the Head.

"And he said, Who art Thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus (the Nazarene, some MSS.), Whom thou art persecuting."—He to Whom St. Stephen prayed in thy hearing, when thou wast consenting unto his death.

¹ Wordsworth.

The great spiritual crises of life are in secret ; others may be near, but the personal dealings of Jesus with the soul, the arresting, transforming utterances of His Voice, none can enter into, none can hear. The sinner and the Saviour face to face ; the “ thou ” and the “ Me,” the “ Thou ” and the “ me ” the only factors in the colloquy, “ I am Jesus.” “ What wilt Thou have me to do ? ”

The life henceforth belonged to Jesus ; His Will was to be its rule, His glory to be its object. Shall we too say “ Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ? ”

But God, be it noted, makes use of means. “ Arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.”

Ananias, called of God, replies with readiness, “ Behold, I am here, Lord,” but shrinks when he learns the nature of the command, “ Lord, I am ready, but——.” How well we know by experience the hesitations of our obedience. We thought we were ready to obey the Voice, but—the command was not that which we expected, and we shrank from its fulfilment.

“ But the Lord”—Who is very pitiful and of tender mercy to our frailty—“ said unto him, Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My Name before the Gentiles, and Kings, and the children of Israel : for I will shew him how great things he must suffer for My Name’s sake.” He must be perfected by suffering, as he follows his Master in the way.

Note the occupation of Saul during his time of darkness ; he fasted and prayed—“ Behold, he prayeth.” It was not that he had never prayed before, but think of the change in his prayers since he had seen, and heard the Voice of, Jesus.

“ And (Ananias) putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto

thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales ; and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized."

There was only one way by which even a chosen vessel could be received into the Holy Catholic Church, be made a living member of Christ, and receive the gifts of the Holy Ghost. It was through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism ordained by Christ Himself.

"And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God."

"Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is (the) Very Christ."

This was "the holy doctrine" which St. Paul preached, and of which the Collect speaks ; Christ the Son of God, the Christ whom the Jewish Scriptures foretold, the Messiah, the Deliverer, the Prince of Peace.

The Gospel is chosen possibly in reference to the forsaking of all earthly things which was the consequence of St. Paul's conversion.

"What things were gain to me," he says in writing to the Philippians, "those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord ; for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things."

"Behold, we have forsaken all," said St. Peter, "and followed Thee ; what shall we have therefore ?"

"I will show him how great things he must suffer for My Name's sake," had been the message to Ananias. In replying to St. Peter, our Lord at once "drew off the minds of the Apostles from earthly hopes to spiritual joys ; and He

now speaks of the heavenly Jerusalem, the Israel of God, in which the Apostles (their warfare being accomplished) will reign in glory."

"In the regeneration," in the new birth of the Saints at the Resurrection—in the heavenly Jerusalem.

"Ye which have followed Me." The Way of the Cross must be trodden before there can be the participation in glory. There is only one road which leads to the Crown ; it is the road to Calvary, that road along which Christ Himself bore the Cross.

"Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings ; that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

"Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, *for My Name's sake*, shall receive an hundredfold,"—for all Christians are brothers and sisters in Christ—"and shall inherit everlasting life."

"But"—the warning is a solemn one—"many that are first shall be last, and the last first." "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

The words of the Gospel are few ; but how much matter for meditation they convey.

- (i.) The Christian is to have only one thought, one object—to follow Christ.
- (ii.) In following Him, he looks "not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."
- (iii.) The claim of Christ is an absolute claim ; *all* has to be given up which would keep the soul back from Him.
- (iv.) Our hope is fixed in Eternity—"shall inherit everlasting life."

"When Christ Who is our Life shall appear,
then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."

- (v.) The solemnity of the warning—the first last, the last first.

We, the inheritors of "the holy doctrine"; we, the members of that Holy Church of which St. Paul was an Apostle, draw near to the Altar of God to offer to Him our Sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving—

- (a) For the wonders of His grace manifested in His Apostle;
- (b) For the gift of holy doctrine which through him we have received;
- (c) For the example which he has left of a life of heart-whole devotion, faithful even to a death of martyrdom.

Christ holds all lives, all the interests of the Church and of the world, in His Sacred Hands. He calls the lives He needs, and transforms them to His purpose and His will. His love is the same, His grace the same, His Personal knowledge and control of each human life the same, that it was in the days of Saul of Tarsus.

Think of this as you kneel in His Sacred Presence. You approach the Holy Sacrifice: He has surrendered, sacrificed all for *you*, and His claim is that in union with Him your sacrifice should be whole and complete. Is it so as yet?

Why is the world still in ignorance of Jesus? Why are the Sacraments neglected, why is His Love despised? Because of the want of entire surrender, and the consequent want of witness to the claims of Jesus on the part of professing Christians, and even of constant communicants.

The changed life of Saul of Tarsus has moved a whole

world : what would be the effect of lives absorbed in Jesus even in the twentieth century ?

Jesus is present in the Holy Eucharist, His grace is there, His Love is there, His purpose for the world is there ; but He must have willing means—"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ?"

"This kind,"—the hesitation to do the perfect Will, the doubts as to possibilities, and the thousand obstacles which our imaginations and Satan excite within our minds—"this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

Discipline the body, be fervent in prayer, seek even in the dark for the grace of illumination, and to you too shall come the Voice—"It shall be told thee what thou must do." "He is a chosen vessel unto Me to bear My Name" before the world.

When you have received the Heavenly Food, your soul shall indeed be strengthened ; and in the strength of that Meat you will be enabled to go forth and in your life to prove that "This is the Very Christ."

It is so often the unexpected lives, the lives of apparent obscurity and humbleness, which by the constancy of their faith and the beauty of their patience, most influence the souls of those with whom they come in contact. The inner life of union with Christ, the very life of Christ Himself, shines through the frail earthly tabernacle, and draws souls to the knowledge of His claims and of His Love.

There is no power so potent as the power of the Sacramental life of Jesus manifested in the lives of His true and humble followers.

In Preparation—

"Turn Thou us, O good Lord, and so shall we be turned. Be favourable, O Lord, be favourable to Thy

people, who turn to Thee in weeping, fasting, and praying."

In *Communion*—

"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

In *Thanksgiving*—

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him."

"Rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding in thanksgiving."

The Presentation of Christ in the Temple

COMMONLY CALLED THE PURIFICATION OF SAINT
MARY THE VIRGIN

The Collect.—Almighty and ever-living God, we humbly beseech Thy Majesty, that, as Thy Only-Begotten Son was this day presented in the temple in substance of our flesh, so we may be presented unto Thee with pure and clean hearts, by the same Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Mal. iii. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. Luke ii. 22.

In the Law of Moses an interval of forty days was appointed between the day of birth, and the day when the mother presented herself for readmission to the congregation, and her infant son for an offering to the Lord. Hence the festival of the Purification is kept forty days after Christmas.

“When the days of her purification, according to the Law of Moses, were accomplished, they brought Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord ;”

“(As it is written in the Law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord ;)”

“And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons.”

“The submission of the Blessed Virgin to the ceremony of purification, and of her Divine Son to that of presenta-

tion in the Temple, were each of them an illustration of the perfect humiliation of our Lord to the likeness of sinful man.

The miraculous conception of the Blessed Virgin had been unattended by that for which a ceremonial purification was ordained ; and our Blessed Lord, having no original sin, needed not to be offered (or presented) and bought back again. But as at His Baptism, so now, for Himself and for His Holy Mother, He says by their acts, “Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.”¹

The “pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons” indicate the poverty of the Holy Family, the humility of our Lord’s Birth.

“If she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons ; the one for a burnt-offering, and the other for a sin-offering : and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean.”

The Blessed Mother, in her poverty, cannot bring a lamb for an offering, but she brings in her arms the Lamb of God, Who is to be offered both as a burnt-offering, the “burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord,” and as a sin-offering, taking away “the sin of the world.”

“And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon ; and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel : and the Holy Ghost was upon him.”

“To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God,” was the promise, and to Simeon, who had lived apparently in obedience to the statutes and ordinances of the Law, looking forward to the true fulfilment

¹ Blunt.

of its predictions, was the promise fulfilled. "I will make them joyful in My House of prayer."

The Holy Ghost was not indeed yet given in all His fulness, but the true Light, that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world still enlightened all, according to the measure of each.

To Simeon, the man of pure heart and true devotion, was it revealed that "he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ"—the Anointed of God, the true Prophet, Priest and King, "anointed with the oil of gladness" above His fellows.

"And he came by the Spirit into the Temple." Note the work of the Holy Spirit upon this life; "the Holy Ghost was upon him;" "it was revealed to him by the Holy Ghost;" "he came by the Spirit into the Temple."

As "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost," so none but He could prepare this holy man to discern Him.

Dwell upon the scene, as it appeared to human eyes. An old man entering the Temple, poor parents bringing their first-born child, and their humble offering—and yet—"the Lord, Whom ye seek," has "suddenly come to His Temple." Man knows Him not, His people recognise Him not; but faith discerns and sees the Lord's Christ.

"When the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him after the custom of the Law, then took he Him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

'Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart, O Lord,
According to Thy Word, in peace;
For mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation.'

Consider—

- (i.) The privilege afforded to Simeon. Of him alone it is recorded that he took up Christ into his

arms ; took as an Infant into his embrace Him Whom the Heaven of heavens cannot contain ;

- (ii.) The intensity of his joy and thankfulness. Now is he willing to go, for earth has nothing more to offer ; the promise has been fulfilled, He has seen the Salvation of God.

Contrast—

- (i.) Our privilege in receiving not once, but frequently, the Body and Blood of Jesus our Redeemer in the Holy Eucharist. We receive Him not merely into our hands, but into our very life ; we are made one with Christ and Christ with us ;
- (ii.) Our joy and gratitude. Are not our thanksgivings too often postponed, or even omitted ? Are they not too often perfunctory and lifeless ? And yet we have not only seen, but received, the Salvation of God.

And to his hymn of joy the holy Simeon added through the Spirit the words of prophecy. While “ Joseph and His Mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him,” Simeon “ blessed them, and said unto Mary His Mother, Behold this Child is set (lieth, as a stone) for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.” To those who reject Him He will prove a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, while to those who believe in and obey Him He will be the foundation-stone of Sion, elect and precious ; they will build safely upon Him as the chief corner-stone.

“(Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also).”

“ As it was said of Joseph, that ‘the iron entered into his soul,’ so the iron that pierced Christ’s tender Body entered into her tender soul : of His enemies it is written, ‘ swords are in their lips,’ so their cruel words to Him

pierced her : and thus all His Passion was as a sword in her soul.”¹

“ That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

The Cross of Christ is a revealer of spirits ; by it were shown what were the true temper and thoughts of those who were brought in contact with it, such as Judas, Peter, Pilate, the two thieves, Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus.

“ These words of Simeon prove that there were then persons among the Jews who had been enabled by the light of the Holy Spirit in the ancient prophecies, to understand the spiritual nature of Christ’s Kingdom, and that He was to suffer as well as to conquer, and to triumph by suffering.”²

One other, too, there was who welcomed the Incarnate Son of God, when, veiled in Human Flesh, He was presented in the Temple. “ Anna, a prophetess, of a great age, a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the Temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.”

“ Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” The old man Simeon, just and devout, and the aged Anna, constant in the Temple and serving God with fastings and prayers—to them, because their souls have been purified, and rendered capable of receiving such blessing, is granted the vision of the Lord when He suddenly came to His Temple.

Note the twofold effect upon Anna. “ She gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” God’s secret ones, who were looking for redemption, but of whom we have no further knowledge.

¹ Isaac Williams.

² Wordsworth.

The teaching of the Epistle is that of the Gospel. The Messenger is to be sent who “ shall prepare the way before Me.” The Lord shall come, and shall come suddenly, to His Temple. “ But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth ?”

In the Temple He shall try and test those who there minister. “ He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.”

“ Then,” after such purification, “ shall the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, as in former years.”

“ I will come near to you in judgment, and I will be a swift witness ” against sinners who “ fear not Me, saith the Lord of Hosts.”

It is almost a repetition of the words of the holy Simeon —“ This Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel ; and for a sign which shall be spoken against ; that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

“ Almighty and ever-living God,” we pray in the Collect, “ we humbly beseech Thy Majesty.” What a sense the words give us, as we use them, of the attributes of Him into Whose Presence we come, of the claim which He has upon our service, of the fear with which we ought to approach Him—“ *We humbly beseech Thy Majesty.*”

“ That as Thy Only-Begotten Son was this day presented in substance of our flesh, so we may be presented unto Thee with pure and clean hearts, by the same, Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”

In substance of our flesh He accomplished the work of man’s redemption ; through the outpouring of His

Precious Blood, through union with His Sacred Body, He accomplishes the purification of His brethren according to the flesh ; and hereafter, when God's appointed time shall come, He will present to the Father, in the New Jerusalem, those whom thus He has redeemed and purified.

Consider who in the picture of to-day are nearest to the Pure and Holy Child presented in His Father's House.

The Blessed Mother, the days of her purification being accomplished ; St. Joseph, the man true and upright, the faithful guardian of the Blessed Mother and the Holy Child ; the holy Simeon, just and devout, guided by the Holy Spirit, the man of pure heart ; the aged woman Anna, constant in worship, serving God with a pure heart fervently —to them is granted spiritual insight and the highest spiritual joy : their eyes behold the Salvation of God.

To the House of God we too come ; the Pure and Holy Child Jesus is with us, as really, as truly, as He was in the Temple of Jerusalem. Faith saw in that Infant form the fulfilment of the promises of God ; Israel's Hope, the Only-Begotten of the Father, the World's Redeemer.

Faith discerns Him still : a humble Altar, a lowly offering, a human priest, a little bread and wine, but—"This is My Body," "This is My Blood."

Yes, He is there, but only faith discerns ; only the pure in heart can discern the Presence of Jesus beneath the humble veils. "Open Thou mine eyes that I may see." "Lord, that I may receive my sight."

"Every man that hath this hope in him"—the hope, may we not say? of seeing Jesus now by faith, hereafter of seeing Him as He is—"purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

The question is, How? What are the means whereby

we may acquire this grace, till the days of our purification are accomplished?

I. Self-examination.

The Holy Spirit of God, Who dwelleth in us, is given to us to lead us into all truth concerning ourselves, and to convince us of sin. We need to be alone with Him, to lay our secret thoughts and lives before Him, that He may speak to our souls. We must work in breaking up the soil of our lives, if His light is to shine upon all their dark places.

“Here is the great sign whether we are making progress in it (self-examination) or not; whether things which a year or two ago would not have struck us as sin now do strike us at once, now are prominent objects, now are things that we could not pass by.”¹

II. And this leads to a still greater and even more blessed way, a good Confession. Are we to think lightly of such a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness? Shall we always find pretexts, really founded on our dislike to pain and shame, why we should not make use of the Sacrament of Penance, instead of seeking reasons why we should gladly welcome such a means of grace.

“O how many souls, now before the Throne, and before the Lamb there are, who but for this blessed Sacrament had never been counted worthy to enter into the Presence of the Great King!”

III. “When the days of her Purification were accomplished.” “And perhaps we think too little of the purifying influence of that greatest and holiest and most wonderful of all Sacraments (the Sacrament of the Altar) in itself. We think—or we try to think—of the repentance, and faith, and

¹ Dr. J. Mason Neale.

love—that ought to be in us before we presume to approach the Altar: we think—or we try to think—of the strength, the comfort, the union with Christ that that Communion gives us. But remember, this is like the coal that touched Isaiah's lips; itself to make us clean, itself to remove everything that defiles, itself to give fuller pardon and adoption to those that truly repent."

IV. What may we say of suffering? If the Holy Spirit could inspire the words, concerning our Lord Himself as Man, that He was made "perfect through suffering," what may we not believe of the power of suffering accepted for Christ, and of the privilege of union with Christ which it may convey?

The more the outward man, through suffering, has decayed, the more transparent the frail covering, through suffering, has become, the brighter has shone the indwelling life of Jesus in His suffering member.

Suffering borne in union with Him who hung and suffered upon the Cross for our redemption—have we never seen its purifying, transforming, ennobling power, in those who, after suffering, have now entered into their rest?

In Preparation—

Pray that you may be led by the Holy Spirit to submit your soul in all things to Him, Who acts as a refiner and purifier of silver; that He may purify and purge you as gold and silver, precious in His sight; that you may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

In Communion—

"Mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation."

In *Thanksgiving*—

Pray for grace that you through your communions
may grow in likeness to the Holy Child; may be
“strong in spirit,” “filled with wisdom ;” and that the
grace of God may abide with you for ever.

St. Matthias's Day

The Collect.—O Almighty God, Who into the place of the traitor Judas didst choose Thy faithful servant Matthias to be of the number of the twelve Apostles ; Grant that Thy Church, being always preserved from false Apostles, may be ordered and guided by faithful and true pastors ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Acts i. 15. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. xi. 25.

It is the festival of him who not being one of the Twelve chosen and commissioned by our Lord Himself, yet was chosen by the Church, acting under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to be “ numbered with the eleven Apostles ” and ordained by them to the position “ from which Judas by transgression fell.”

Almighty God, we are reminded by the Collect, chose “ His faithful servant Matthias to be of the number of the twelve Apostles,” and yet it was the Church who selected him and put forward his name for election ; and the prayer of the Apostles in the Epistle, “ Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two Thou hast chosen,” was addressed directly to Christ.

“ Christ was educating His Apostles in the fundamental doctrine of Church polity, viz., that the Church is ruled and protected by Him, not visibly present in body, but sitting on His Royal Throne, in power and glory, at the Right Hand of God.”

The Book of the Acts of the Apostles almost begins and ends with the same expression—"the *Lord* Jesus;" it occurs in the Epistle for to-day, and in the final chapter where St. Paul preaches at Rome "the things concerning the Lord Jesus."

The whole book is the record of Christ by His Spirit ruling the affairs of His Body the Church, and maintaining her cause by the exercise of His Power as Supreme Ruler.

With this thought in mind we pray "Grant that Thy Church, being always preserved from false Apostles, may be ordered and guided by faithful and true pastors"—true shepherds of the flock, themselves under the guidance of "the Shepherd and Bishop" of souls.

"Ordered and guided" are words which, perhaps, deserve consideration as showing the true position, the office, and work of Bishops and priests in ruling the Church of Christ—a point which seems in danger of being lost sight of in the controversies of the present day. The constitution of the Church is not of man's ordering, but of Christ's.

It is worthy of notice that in this, his first address to his brother Apostles, on the first occasion on which a decision of importance has to be formed by the infant Church, St. Peter falls back upon the Old Testament Scriptures, the fulfilment of which he claims to have been accomplished in the fate of the false Apostle Judas.

"This Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas."

"It is written in the Book of the Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein; and his bishopric (or office) let another take."

The minds of the Apostles—even as the Mind of their

Master, Christ Himself—seem to have been stored with the prophecies and promises of the Hebrew Scriptures, the full understanding and fulfilment of which was being gradually unfolded to them.

How much we lose from want of study in, and meditation upon, the Scriptures, the Psalms especially. God the Holy Ghost is ever ready to shed His light upon them, that we may see the Divine Form of our Master beneath the veil ; but we are too unloving to ask His aid, and to expend the necessary time and labour upon such a task.

Think of the immensity of the responsibility to which Matthias was called : “that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell.”

Think too of the awfulness of that fall : the fall of a companion of Jesus, of one who had lived with Him, been taught by Him, been chosen by Him as His Apostle and servant.

“Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.”

The regular communicant, who is allowed to draw near constantly, and to be made one with Christ his Lord—even he has reason to tremble, and to fear lest he too through the deceit of the world, the flesh, and the devil should betray his Lord.

The responsibility of Communion is so great. We are not therefore to be deterred from reception, but we are to be warned against careless preparation and imperfect thanksgiving, lest we lose the fruits of so great a gift.

St. Matthias is only, to us, an unknown member of the followers of Christ. True, he had “companied” with the Apostles during the whole of our Lord’s Ministry, from the

Baptism by St. John the Baptist to the Ascension, but he was only one of many, with no special characteristics of which we have knowledge, and no particular claim to such high privilege, and yet—God chose him to take the place of Judas, to be one of the foundation-stones in the heavenly Jerusalem.

Think of the responsibility of the thousands of obscure lives around us, because of their call by God, because, though obscure and unknown, yet they have been called to fellowship with Jesus, to participation in His Sacraments, to bear witness to the power of His Life.

We know nothing of St. Matthias before his election, and his name only occurs in tradition subsequently ; and yet he was an Apostle and a foundation-stone of the Kingdom. Humility is the true note of that Kingdom ; they only can hope to enter—

“ Who have learn'd lowliness
 From their Lord's Cradle, patience from His Cross ;
 Whom poor men's eyes and hearts consent to bless ;
 To whom, for Christ, the world is loss.”¹

We must ever approach the Blessed Sacrament in the spirit of deepest humility. We have there the perfect Pattern of Humility : He, our King, stoops to us, His subjects, and we, in Presence of such humility, must humble ourselves because of our unlikeness to our Lord.

“ God protecteth the humble and delivereth him ; the humble He loveth and comforteth ; unto the humble He inclineth Himself ; unto the humble He giveth great grace.”

“ Unto the humble He revealeth His secrets, and sweetly draweth and inviteth them unto Himself.”²

¹ Keble.

² Thomas à Kempis.

This is the thought with which the Gospel opens.

“I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight.”

The words denote the thankful acquiescence of the Divine Son in all His Father’s dispensations, as the Supreme Ruler over all, and convey to us the lesson of submission in all things to the will and judgment of Him Who, while Lord of Heaven and Earth, is yet our Father as members of His Son. “Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways.”

“The wise,” that is, those who are wise in their own eyes. If they will turn from their pride, and become, as little children, humble and lowly in His sight, then shall they, too, be able to see the wonders of the love of God, and of the Incarnate Life of His dear Son.

“All things are delivered unto Me of My Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.”

The mysteries of the Eternal Godhead are not to be discovered by man’s powers of reason. Faith is “the Gift of God.” “To another faith by the same Spirit.” “The fruit of the Spirit is faith.” But the Son, in obedience to the law of the Father, can reveal the mysteries of the faith only to those who, in humility, are willing to bend their necks to His yoke, and to accept His teaching.

“Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Was there ever such a majestic, personal claim put forward save by Him Who had the right to assert it, or was ever such promise made before to the weary, heavy-laden sons of earth?

"Labour and are heavy laden." How well we know the meaning of the words. Think of the myriad needs of the myriads of mankind who toil beneath the burden of their loads ; and yet He says to *all*, "I will give you rest."

Men labour for knowledge, and in the world's knowledge find not rest. The Fount of all Wisdom says to them, "*I* can give you rest in the knowledge of Myself."

Man labours for the notice, the estimation of his fellow-men ; for position, fame, notoriety, and sinks weary beneath the load of unsatisfying toil. "I, in the knowledge of Myself, alone can give thee rest." "My Kingdom is not of this world," but he who is a sharer in My Kingdom of humility shall be sharer in the Kingdom of My Glory.

"Take My yoke upon you." He does not say there is no yoke ; there *is* a yoke, and the yoke must leave its mark upon the neck of the wearer ; but it is "My yoke," even My own Cross which I lay upon thee, and in bearing it thou shalt "learn of Me."

His Life is the book from which we learn the character of the yoke and how to bear it. We sit in humility at His Feet, and by His Spirit, He to Whom all things are delivered, condescends to teach us. In learning of Him we must indeed be as little children, humble and docile, with no thought of advancement save in the knowledge of His Love.

"I am meek and lowly in heart." None but the All-perfect Son could utter such a claim. Christ was lowly in birth and outward life ; but the true lowness is that lowness of heart which found expression in His every thought, and word, and deed.

"Ye shall find rest to your souls." A second promise of rest, of rest to the soul. The body may labour, but the soul may rest—the body may bear the burden of toil, of

pain and suffering, but the soul to which Christ has revealed Himself, and to which He has taught His lessons of meekness and lowliness, can be at rest in His love.

“For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.”

The words fitly close the Gospel on the festival of him who in obscurity was called to follow Christ ; who in humility was called to bear the burden of intense responsibility ; who in humility and obscurity discharged faithfully the duties of his high office ; and who died a death, to us unknown, in the cause of the Master Whose example he had faithfully followed.

All the lives of Christ’s followers approach His Altar ; there is no distinction of position, of birth or of reputation there ; all, the highest and the lowest, the well-known and the obscure, are made partakers of the One Bread, and members one of another.

We are strangers one to another ; we may know many by sight, or with a certain measure of acquaintance, but mainly we stand outside each other’s lives. The real trials of our neighbour, the real attitude of his soul we know not, his struggles and his trials we can only dimly imagine.

But “Thou, Lord, knowest the secrets of our hearts ;” and what a tale of heavy burdens borne in secret, of sore conflict waged where none is nigh, enters into the Master’s ears from the hidden lives of those who approach with us to the Altar of the Lord.

The burden of responsibility in all stations and relationships of life is so heavy. “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Not rest *from* the discharge of responsibility, but rest *in* its discharge, the rest of union with the Almighty Son of God.

"I am meek and lowly in heart"—I stoop even to share your burden ; I bear with all your slowness of heart, and backwardness to perceive My willingness to aid.

Your souls are ill at ease, filled with a myriad doubts and fears—hesitations to undertake, fear lest you should not fulfil the task whereunto ye are called. Take the yoke as My Yoke ; believe that I know the hearts of all men and rule in the Kingdom of men ; learn of Me how to bear, and see My Hand ever ready to interpose between thy shoulder and the burden : then shalt thou find that My yoke is easy and My burden light.

"I thank Thee, O Father, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

As babes, desiring to be fed with the very Food of Heaven, must we draw near, and with the feeding shall come the revelation, of our Master's Call, our Master's Yoke, our Master's Presence, and our Master's Love.

It is "Jesus only." "Come unto *Me*, and *I* will give." "Take *My* yoke, and learn of *Me*. *My* yoke, *My* burden." In humility and obedience we come, and we find Him, and we receive of Him ; we learn of Him, and with rest in our souls we go back to the world to bring forth the fruits of His teaching, to bear His yoke to the honour and glory of His Name.

In *Preparation*—

"Almighty God, unto Whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid ; Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Thee, and worthily magnify Thy Holy Name ; through Christ our Lord."

In Communion—

“Teach me Thy way, O Lord : and lead me in the right way.”

In Thanksgiving—

“Pray that our God would ever count thee worthy of thy high calling in Him, and fulfil in thee all the good pleasure of His goodness, and glorify His Name in thee.”¹

¹ “A Year of Eucharists.”

The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The Collect.—We beseech Thee, O Lord, pour Thy grace into our hearts ; that, as we have known the Incarnation of Thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by His Cross and Passion we may be brought unto the glory of His resurrection ; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Isaiah vii. 10. *The Gospel.*—St. Luke i. 26.

We come into the presence of a mystery most profound. In the contemplation of that mystery there passes before us the whole of the Incarnate Life from the Birth to the Resurrection : the Cross and the Passion stand out, in their power, and in their personal relationship to ourselves.

Naturally we pray for the outpouring of grace into our hearts, that we may accept in faith the revelation, and may be partakers of the power of the Incarnate Life.

“We beseech Thee, O Lord, pour Thy grace into our hearts.” Compare this with the words addressed by the Angel to the Blessed Virgin. “Hail, thou that art highly favoured,” or “endued with grace ;” and, “Thou hast found favour (or grace) with God.” (R.V. Margins.)

Contemplate the wonders of the grace of God, and of its operation in the human soul.

"That, as we have known the Incarnation of Thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel." Herein is the Mystery.

"A mystery," says an old writer, "is a thing kept secret and hid from our understanding, until it be revealed to us. Some mysteries, when revealed, may be in a good measure explained and understood. But other mysteries are there, which when revealed to us, we know the reality or certainty of them, but cannot comprehend the manner and mode how they are. These are the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, and the mystery of the Incarnation of Christ, or the union of the Divine and Human Natures in One Person."

The mysteries of the Faith were not revealed "indifferently to everybody," but were made known "to those who desired to be instructed, and in proportion as they became capable to receive them."

Consider the responsibility, the privilege, the blessedness of those, like ourselves, to whom the revelation of the Mystery of the Incarnation has, in the Catholic Church, been conveyed in all its fulness. "I beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."

In thinking of this Mystery it is well to fall back on the words of revelation and of the Church's Creeds.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

"The same was in the beginning with God."

"All things were made by Him ; and without Him was not anything made that was made."

"And the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth."

"I believe in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord,

Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary."

(Note that the Conception by the Holy Ghost and the Virgin-Birth are articles of the Apostles' Creed.)

"I believe in One Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-begotten Son of God. Begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, Begotten, not made, being of one Substance with the Father, by Whom all things were made ; Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, And was made Man."

There is no doubt as to the meaning of the Church when she enunciates the doctrine of the Incarnation. Even as we use the words, we know that we are speaking of a Mystery so profound that no human eye can trace its depths ; yet, illumined by grace, we may accept and find salvation in its wonders.

"The right Faith is that we believe and confess : that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man :"

"God of the Substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds : and Man, of the substance of His Mother, born in the world."

"Perfect God, and Perfect Man : of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting."

We bow our heads in the presence of the Divine Mystery, and give thanks that we should have been allowed to know the Incarnation of God's dear Son, Jesus Christ.

"That as we have known the Incarnation of Thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by His Cross and Passion we may be brought into the glory of His Resurrection."

The Kingdom of the Resurrection is the Kingdom of the Incarnate Son, and to fellowship in that Kingdom we, as members of the Son of God, look forward as our inheritance.

But the Sign of the Kingdom is the Cross. The Cross, the emblem of the Passion, was stamped upon us when we became members of Christ. That Cross has to be borne by us, and in its path have we to follow, else we lose our way to the glory of the Resurrection.

There must be fellowship in the self-denial, the humiliation of the Passion, if there is to be fellowship in glory.

“By the Mystery of Thy Holy Incarnation ; by Thy Cross and Passion ; Good Lord, deliver us.”

Deliver us, by the power of Thy Cross and Passion, from the world-powers which would hinder, the flesh which would betray, Satan who would beguile, and so cause us to lose our inheritance, the glory of Thy Resurrection.

The Epistle contains the foreshadowing of the Incarnation and the prophecy of the Virgin-Birth.

“The Lord Himself shall give you”—who weary Him with doubts—“a sign ; Behold a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His Name Immanuel.”

“Butter and honey shall He eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.”

Although He is Immanuel, God with us, yet He shall be nourished, like other children, with ordinary earthly food, for He shall have a true human nature, being born of the seed of David according to the flesh.

In the Gospel we have the fulfilment of the prophecy, a prophecy, be it noted, quoted by St. Matthew in relating

the message of the Angel to St. Joseph before the Birth of our Lord.

The prophet had said, “Behold a Virgin shall bear a Son,” and now the Evangelist seems to say: “Behold this is the Virgin; this is the Son.” The promises of God seemed to have failed; Israel was in bondage, the house of David was unknown and forgotten.

“But man’s helplessness is God’s opportunity, and nothing was lost in His sight; the fulness of time was come; and it was fitting that the vessel, meet to be recipient of the Divine Grace, should be nurtured not in Kings’ palaces, but in obscure poverty.”¹

“Hail thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women.”

No wonder that when the Blessed Virgin saw the Angel, and heard such words, she, full of the grace of humility, “was troubled at his saying,” and with that peculiar thoughtfulness which marks all that is said of her, “cast in her mind” what such a salutation might mean.

“Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour (or grace) with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb.” The mystery is alluded to but not declared; it is said “thou shalt conceive,” but not in what manner.

“And thou shalt call His Name Jesus.” The “Name which is above every name.” The Joshua Who shall bring His people into the promised inheritance of God.

“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest.”

This is He Whom our first Mother Eve expected should be born of her when she said, “I have gotten a man from the Lord,” or “a Man, the Lord.”

¹ Isaac Williams.

"And the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David ; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever ; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end."

This is He of Whom it is said, "His seat is like as the sun before Me." This is the Shiloh promised to Israel, He to Whom God should say, "Sit Thou on My Right Hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool."

And here though the supernatural Birth is implied and received in faith by the Blessed Virgin, it is not as yet fully stated or understood ; therefore she asks in faith for an explanation—"How shall this be?"

Then comes the fulness of the revelation, the declaration of the mystery.

"The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the Power of the Highest shall overshadow thee : therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

In deepest reverence we contemplate the marvels of the Annunciation. We murmur, "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief ;" and we listen to the words of her whose faith and purity and humility seem so far above us—

"Behold, the handmaid of the Lord ; be it unto me according to Thy Word."

"Wonderful moment, on which depended all the destiny of mankind : for in the things of the Spirit the will of man must ever co-operate with the Divine Call. And here was perfect faith, humility, and submission. Sanctified by the Holy Ghost, her heart had already by faith conceived the Son of God, before He was conceived in Her womb."

"Unfaith, in the Epistle, is contrasted with the fulness of faith, in the Gospel. The sign was refused by Ahaz ; the revelation is accepted by the Blessed Virgin. As in her,

the Mother of Him Who is our God, all was of faith, so must it be with us. For faith we must pray, a faith like unto hers, a faith the work of God the Holy Ghost, a faith which can exist only where grace has abounded, where purity of soul is found, and where all is bowed in submission before the Majesty of God—‘Be it unto me according to Thy Word.’”¹

“If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.”

A quotation will be of service in preparation for our Communion.

“The words which the Blessed Virgin was inspired (in the Magnificat) to speak concerning herself, and those which were spoken by the Angel, ‘sent from God,’ show to what an exalted place she was raised by the Providence of God ; and her meek reception of the wonderful revelation shows a holiness in the subjection of her will to the Will of the Lord, Whose handmaid she was, that no saint ever surpassed.

“Holy in her original character, her holiness was made more perfect by that most intimate union with Jesus, which existed for nine months of her life. Little children were brought to Jesus that He might lay His hands on them, and thus sanctify them by the touch of a passing moment ; but the same Jesus abode long in His Mother’s bosom, His spotless Body was formed of her substance, and sanctified her both in what He received from her as Man, and what He gave to her as God.”²

¹ Isaac Williams.

² Blunt, “Annotated Book of Common Prayer.”

Consider—

I. (a) The mystery.

(b) The blessedness of our communion with our Lord.

(a) The mystery of union ; the finite with the Infinite, the sinful with the Sinless, the child of time with the Eternal, the earthly with the Heavenly, in our Communion.

(b) The blessedness of which we are partakers in our reception of the Body and Blood of the Incarnate Son.

The Blessed Virgin became a Paradise in herself through the Presence of her Son. We receive no less a Presence ; the Presence, which is the joy of Heaven and of Angelic hosts, is communicated to us and abides with us.

II. The spiritual condition which must be necessary for such reception.

“Full of grace” was the Virgin Mother ; faith, purity, meekness, submission were her characteristics, the consequence of the work of grace within the soul. “God giveth grace to the humble.”

Test self as to

(i.) Humility.

(ii.) Faith.

(iii.) Purity.

(iv.) Submission to the Will of God.

Am I constant in use of the means of grace, the means whereby grace shall be kept alive, fostered, increased within my soul ?

III. The activities of the Holy Ghost.

(a) He it is who communicates grace to the soul ; the fruit of His work is “faith, goodness, meekness, temperance.”

(b) As in the Incarnation, so in the Blessed Sacrament, He is the efficient cause.

"The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the Power of the Highest shall overshadow thee."

And so it is the overshadowing power of God, the Holy Ghost, whereby the bread and wine we offer upon the Altar of God become the very Body and the very Blood of Jesus Christ our Lord.

"Emmanuel, God with us." Each time we approach the Holy Eucharist the words are fulfilled ; each time we receive the Holy Sacrament we receive Emmanuel—God with us.

Once that faith is formed within us, once our eyes are purified to see the vision, there can be no doubt about our preparation. What was preparation of form, and of vagueness, becomes the preparation of deepest love. "Whence is this to me that my Lord should come to me ?" we seem to say.

In Preparation—

Pray for faith in the revelation of God, in the Incarnation, in the work of God the Holy Ghost.

Say the "Veni Creator."

In Communion—

"Behold the servant of the Lord, be it unto me according to Thy Word."

In Thanksgiving—

Pray for the grace of God the Holy Ghost that you may "Keep that which is committed to thy trust."

St. Mark's Day

The Collect.—O Almighty God, Who hast instructed Thy holy Church with the heavenly doctrine of Thy Evangelist Saint Mark; Give us grace, that, being not like children carried away with every blast of vain doctrine, we may be established in the truth of Thy holy Gospel; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Eph. iv. 7. *The Gospel.*—St. John xv. 1.

Jesus the True Vine; His people the branches.

The record of the Truth—"I am the Truth"—was committed to human agency.

The work of the Holy Spirit has to be combined with the fitness and labour of man.

Man, to be the agent of the Holy Spirit, must be fitted through the operation of the Spirit for the discharge of his responsibility.

Man, to be capable of rendering a faithful record, has to make use of the powers of work and intelligence with which he has been endowed.

The members of the True Vine are to be the living records of the Truth.

"He gave some Apostles, and some Evangelists." But to every man is given to profit withal—to each his own sphere and his own work, and to each the responsibility of exhibiting a living record of the Truth.

"Unto *every one of us* is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ."

The gifts of Christ are the gifts of our Risen and Ascended Lord, of Him Who, as Head of the Church, provides for the edification and perfecting of the Church and of its members.

Consider the evidence of the eternal Love of Christ; not only as manifested in the Resurrection and Ascension, but in His provision for His Church to the end of time.

The gifts are given

"For the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

"Till we all come." The perfecting of the Church, the glory of the Body of Christ, is hindered by the failure of the least of her members to co-operate with the grace given.

"The unity of the faith." "The faith" is not of man but of God: "the faith once delivered to the saints :" witnessed to by Apostles, recorded through the inspiration of the Spirit by the Evangelists.

The Creeds of the Church are the authorised expressions of the Faith, the symbols and safeguards of her unity.

The unity of the Church is not only unity of life, but a unity in the truth.

"A creed is at the basis of the Christian life—a creed which finds its best expression and safeguard in the formulated doctrine of the Trinity and the Incarnation."¹

Remember the prayer of Jesus for His Church. "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

¹ Gore.

Unity of faith in the members of the Church can alone avail to bring the world to belief in the Divine Mission of the Incarnate Head.

The Church is founded upon the Rock, stable and sure. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning.”

Her members, therefore, will be “no more children, tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men.” “All thy children shall be taught of the Lord ; and great shall be the peace of thy children.”

The unity of the faith is to be manifested in, and maintained by love—“speaking the truth in love.”

Consider the marvels of the Body of Christ in the perfection of its organisation.

True, the sin of man, his un-love, breeding disunion, has marred the design, but consider it as depicted by the Apostle—

“ May grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ : from Whom the whole Body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the Body ; unto the edifying of itself in love.”

The Love of Christ, reflected in His Church, is the witness to unity.

The Gospel portrays in the words of our Lord Himself the union “ betwixt Christ and His Church.”

“ I am the Vine, ye are the branches.”

“ My Father is the Husbandman.” The Eternal Father, Who sent His Son, watches over through all

eternity that union which, through the Incarnation, has been accomplished.

"Every branch in *Me* that beareth not fruit He taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

What a revelation the words convey of the purpose and meaning of the discipline of Divine Love. "Increased fruitfulness is the end of discipline."

Apart from the Vine, the branch withers and decays. Apart from Christ there is no spiritual life.

Severed from the life of Christ by mortal sin, the soul withers and becomes "dead in trespasses and sin."

"If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered;" inasmuch as it receives the living sap no longer, "and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

The image is of the fires kindled to consume the dressings of the vineyards. The Lord leaves the image, just as it is, to work its proper effect.

The glory of the Father—the Great Husbandman—is involved in the fruitfulness of the members of Christ's Body.

Love, the bond between Christ and His members.

Love and obedience, the characteristics of the Incarnate Life, must be the characteristics of the partakers in the Divine Life.

"These things have I spoken unto you that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

"My joy," "the joy that is mine," the joy of complete self-surrender in love to love.

"The constant enjoyment of the Father's love in the way

of obedience constitutes the joy of Christ, which will in the same way be reproduced in His disciples.”¹

The completion of their joy was to be found in the consummation of their union with their Lord, but that consummation was to be accomplished through suffering.

The Collect plainly asserts that God, the Great Husbandman, is the source of the heavenly doctrine whereby the Church has been instructed.

It recognises the presence of, and the dangers arising from, “vain doctrine,” as opposed to that which is heavenly in its origin, and prays for the firm establishment of the members of the True Vine in the truth of the Holy Gospel.

The danger is no less in the twentieth century than at the time when the Collect took its present form.

The present is pre-eminently a time when the world, seeking ever in childish frivolity after some new excitement, is “carried away with every blast of vain doctrine.”

Members of the Holy Church, while realising the divine foundation of their faith, are yet subject to the force of the currents and waves of thought animating the world amid which they live.

Hence the need by prayer and meditation to deepen faith in the truths of the Holy Gospel ; by participation in the Sacraments to maintain our unity with the True Vine.

It is to St. Mark more especially that we owe the portrayal of Christ as “touched with the feeling of our infirmities ;” as the Perfect *Man*, “leaving us an example that we should follow His steps.”

¹ Godet.

He it is Who draws near to us in the Blessed Sacrament with

- (i.) Perfect knowledge of the infirmities of our human life ;
- (ii.) Perfect love for the infirm.

He, the True Vine, is conscious not only of the weakness and the dangers of each of the branches which draws its life from Him, but of the source of that weakness and danger.

He sees the unfruitfulness and the source of the unfruitfulness in each branch ; marks the first signs of a withering love and devotion.

He, the Master of the Apostles and Teacher of Evangelists, comes, in the tenderness of Divine compassion, to teach us the things which belong unto our peace, the necessity of abiding union with Himself.

In united worship, and united participation in the heavenly gifts, He binds us into closer unity one with another.

It has been observed that Christ's condescension to human infirmities, His coming down to meet our weakness, is especially marked in the two miracles of healing recorded by St. Mark alone—the miracles at Decapolis and Bethsaida.

In the Blessed Sacrament He comes down indeed to meet our weakness, and still is willing and able to perform miracles of restoration upon those who, in faith and humility, draw near to Him for healing.

He renews union, strengthens faith, uplifts the falling, gives new life to the withering branch, purges the unfruitful, that we may grow up unto Him in all things, and fulfil the purpose of our individual lives.

Pray for—

- (i.) Penitence and humility, because thou, being what

thou art through the gift of Christ, art truly conscious of thy shortcomings and unprofitableness.

- (ii.) For deeper faith in the truth of the Holy Gospel, *i.e.* in Jesus thy Saviour Whom that Gospel reveals to thee, and Who in the Eucharist presents Himself as the object of thy devotion and love.
- (iii.) For grace to abide in Him Who in thy communion abides in thee, that thou through union with Him may bring forth fruit to the glory of God the Father.

SS. Philip and James

The Collect.—O Almighty God, Whom truly to know is everlasting life ; Grant us perfectly to know Thy Son Jesus Christ to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life ; that following the steps of Thy holy Apostles, Saint Philip and Saint James, we may steadfastly walk in the way that leadeth to eternal life ; through the same Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—St. James i. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. John xiv. 1.

The way of life, and unity in the way, seem to be the chief thoughts suggested by the service of the festival.

St. Philip, not to be confused with Philip the Deacon, mentioned in Acts vi., was one of the first of our Lord's disciples. The statement that he was "found" of Jesus implies a previous seeking. To him first of the apostolic band the words "Follow Me" were addressed.

"He is thought by some to have accompanied our Blessed Lord while St. Andrew and St. Peter returned to their occupation of fishing. It may have been this faithful companionship which led to the loving rebuke, 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast *thou* not known Me, Philip ?'"

He is always in the lists of the Apostles linked with another, and stands at the head of the second division—"Philip and Bartholomew."

- (i.) He led Nathaniel to Christ ; set him in the way.
- (ii.) He asks our Lord, " Whence shall we buy bread that these"—those who are fasting and weary by reason of the length of the way—" may eat ? "
- (iii.) He brought the Greeks who " desired to see Jesus " to Him—again, pointing out the way.

What blessedness ! To be found of Christ, and then to spend life in leading others to Him that, together, they may follow Jesus in the way.

" O Almighty God, Whom truly to know is everlasting life."

The words are those of our Lord Himself in His Own prayer to His Father. " This is life eternal, that they may know Thee, the Only True God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent."

" Grant us perfectly to know Thy Son Jesus Christ to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

Again the words are the words of Christ. " I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life : no man cometh unto the Father but by Me."

It is a supreme claim, and contains a supreme truth. " I alone am the Way ; " it is only through Christ that we can apprehend God as the Father, and so approach the Father. " No man cometh unto the Father : " here for the first time the end " of the way, " even the Father, is distinctly told.

They are the words of the Only-Begotten Son, Who " proceeded forth and came from God, " that He might bring mankind back to the knowledge and love of that Father Whom they had forsaken.

Dwell upon the fulness of the titles of Christ. " A man can at most show the way to others ; he can *be* neither the way, the truth, nor the life."

"Christ says, 'I am the Way ;' not simply 'I reveal,' or 'I open ;' Christ is all Himself. The pronoun is emphatic, and at once turns the thoughts of the Apostles from a method to a Person." ¹

"‘I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.’ Without the Way there is no going ; without the Truth there is no knowing ; without the Life there is no living. *I am* the Way, which thou oughtest to follow ; the Truth, which thou oughtest to trust ; the Life, which thou oughtest to hope for." ²

"That following the steps of Thy Holy Apostles, St. Philip and St. James, we may steadfastly walk in the way that leadeth to eternal life."

Note the connection : "The way that leadeth to eternal life." "I am the Way, and the Life."

The end of the way is God, the Father, Himself. "It is not in heaven that we are to find God, but in God that we are to find heaven."

The way is the way of the Cross, but in the way we are united to the Crucified, and rely upon Him Who is the Truth.

In the Epistle, St. James himself tells us of "the way" ;

- (a) Its difficulties ;
- (b) Its requirements ;
- (c) Its blessedness."

- (a) "Divers temptations."
"If any of you lack wisdom."
Instability.
The danger of riches.

¹ Westcott.

² Thomas à Kempis.

(b) A spirit of joy.

Faith.

Patience.

Prayer.

(c) "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation ; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him."

The teaching is that of one who himself had trodden the way, knew its difficulties, was conscious of its requirements, and who has attained the end.

The Holy Gospel conveys the words of comfort and of assurance to the pilgrim following in the way. "Let not your heart be troubled ; ye believe in God, believe also in Me."

He Himself was nearing the end of life's journey, and He looks forward with longing to return to His Father, and His Father's House, which is His Home.

But as He thinks of His followers in the present, so He thinks of them in the future. "I go to prepare a place for you." "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also."

"And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." According to the true reading, "Whither I go ye know the way."

"How know we the way ?" is the inquiry of St. Thomas. The end, as just revealed by His Master is, so far as he is concerned, still enveloped in obscurity, and consequently the way by which it is to be attained is also so misty as to be imperceptible.

To explain the end, Jesus substitutes the Father Himself for the Father's House. And when once God is pointed

out as the end, it is easily understood in what sense Jesus declares Himself the Way.

"If ye had known Me ye should have known My Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him."

St. Philip wishes to gain bodily sight in place of the sight of the soul. "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us."

"Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?" "Hast thou not come to know Me?"

Philip had seen the mighty works done by Christ by His own authority, and yet did not recognise the Divine nature dwelling in Him Who had taken the nature of man.

Christ, being Consubstantial with the Father, is able to say, "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself," *i.e.* "from Myself alone." "I say nothing contrary to, or independent of My Father."

"Believe Me,"—Who am the Truth—"that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the very works' sake."

"Not only for those which ye have seen Me do, present as I now am in My Human Nature, but for those which after My Ascension I shall enable others to do, thus showing My Divine power, and My co-equality with the Father."

And then is given, founded on sure authority, the great charter of prayer. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name," *i.e.* in submission to My Will, and conducive to your salvation and God's glory, which are purposed by My Will, "that will I do."

The condition—the furtherance of the Father's glory—furnishes the true limitation of prayer.

"If ye shall ask anything in My Name, I will do it." It

is the strongest possible assertion of His Unity with His Father, of His own inherent power, of His own illimitable love for His brethren.

What thoughts come into our minds as we approach the Altar?

“Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou”—the appeal is personal—“not known Me?”

If the Apostle, as he heard the words, must have looked back in memory over all His Master’s past dealings with Him, over all the wonderful words and works which he had been privileged to hear and see, what must be our retrospect as we hear the words addressed to ourselves?

Our past teaching; our past opportunities; our past Confessions and Communions; the pleadings of the Spirit, the Voice of Christ speaking in the solitude to our souls—“and yet hast thou not come to *know* Me?”

He who truly knows Christ must acknowledge His Godhead, and consequently His claim to an entire obedience and devotion.

A half-hearted service implies an imperfect knowledge.

Reflect on “the mighty works” which, in His Church and in the Sacraments, Christ has done and is ever doing. “Believe Me for the very works’ sake.”

Pilgrims, falling into divers temptations, lacking in true wisdom, unstable, and often failing under the “burning heat” of trial, we come into the Presence of “the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”

There, throwing down the burden of sorrows, we find joy, because we find Him Who, “in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, is able to succour them that are tempted.”

Faith reveals His Form, and in the light of His Presence things assume their true proportion and their true significance.

We gain patience, because He cheers us with words of promise, and reveals to us the end of our journey—not yet—but a little while. “In your patience possess ye your souls.”

Yes, we come even to own the *blessedness* of temptations, because all trial binds us to Him Who suffered being tempted; because if He gives us one fragment of His own Cross to bear now, it is that He may exchange it for that crown of life “which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.”

“O Almighty God, Whom truly to know is everlasting life; Grant us perfectly to know Thy Son Jesus Christ to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life; that, following the steps of Thy holy Apostles, Saint Philip and Saint James, we may stedfastly walk in the way that leadeth to eternal life; through the same Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

1. Draw near with faith, and behold thy Lord coming once more to set thy feet in the right way, and willing to give thee strength and energy to walk therein.

2. In deepest humility and lowliest penitence worship Him Who says—and in the Eucharist fulfils the words—“I will come again, and receive you unto Myself.”

3. Pray for the grace of perseverance in the way.

“Be Thou also my Guide, and lead me for Thy Name’s sake.”

St. Barnabas the Apostle

The Collect.—O Lord God Almighty, Who didst endue Thy holy Apostle Barnabas with singular gifts of the Holy Ghost; Leave us not, we beseech Thee, destitute of Thy manifold gifts, nor yet of grace to use them alway to Thy honour and glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Acts xi. 22. *The Gospel.*—St. John xv. 12.

An Apostle and yet not one of the chosen Twelve. Sent first by the Church at Jerusalem to Antioch, he went subsequently to Tarsus “for to seek Saul,” whom he brought back with him to Antioch.

In company with Saul he remains for a whole year in Antioch, where “the disciples were first called Christians.”

Having Christ in their hearts, Barnabas and Saul made Christ the beginning and the end of their teaching. Hence they, and those admitted into the Church by their instrumentality, became known as Christ’s ones—than which there could be no higher title of honour.

Further, there being expectation of “a great dearth throughout all the world,” Barnabas and Saul became the chosen messengers to bear relief to the brethren in Judea, and were sent for that purpose to the heads of the Church in Jerusalem.

Notice the frequency of the expression “sent,” and the privilege of being “sent” by the Church, or by the direction of the Holy Spirit, to seek, or to minister to the

souls, or to provide for the wants of, fellow-members of the Church.

The conditions of the Apostolate are laid down by our Blessed Lord in the Holy Gospel.

Christ is the Supreme Head, the Source and Origin of authority.

“Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you.”

The eternal Wisdom of God, and His Divine foreknowledge, have chosen and prepared His human instruments.

By the operation of His Spirit He has fashioned them into fitness for the work whereunto He calls them. By His Spirit He ordains them, sets them apart, fits and qualifies them for the office which He assigns them in His Kingdom.

The call is the proof of love ; the preparation, the equipment, is the manifestation of love.

Being the objects of the Divine Love—“as I have loved you”—those called are to be the ministers of love to others —“that ye love one another.”

See this exemplified in the life of St. Barnabas—the Son of Consolation—as depicted in the Epistle.

Of this love the Divine Master has Himself left the example—

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

Love knows no limits. He who loves Christ, in Christ loves his fellow-men, and for Christ’s sake will be willing even to give his life in their service.

The called of Christ has a twofold privilege. He is

(a) The servant of Jesus, and so privileged to follow in

the Divine Footsteps. "I am among you as he that serveth."

(b) The friend of Jesus.

"Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you."

Note the conditions of the Divine friendship—"If ye do whatsoever I command you." There must be implicit obedience, and yet there is no servile fear.

For He has given to us "power to become *sons*—sons of God" ("the right to become children of God," R.V.). And yet He will say to the blessed, "Well done, good and faithful *servant*." And we must call ourselves "unprofitable *servants*."

"Thus we must be, as it were, servants, and yet not servants, but sons; servants without *servile* fear, but with that *holy* fear which belongs to the servant that entereth into the joy of his Lord; sons of God, in casting out that slavish fear which belongs to him who 'abideth not in the house for ever.'"¹

Think of the wonder of that intimacy of friendship concerning which Christ speaks, "All things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." Think of the interior revelations made by the Master to the disciple in the mystery of communion.

Note further the purpose of the Divine election—

(a) "That ye should go"—being sent—"and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

¹ Wordsworth.

The fruits of the Apostolic Mission are not for time, but for eternity. St. Barnabas brought forth much fruit, and his work of consolation remains in the power of example and encouragement to the end of time.

(b) "That whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name, He may give it you."

The friend of Jesus must ask in the Name of Jesus ; and so close and intimate is the union between the Master and the disciple, that whatsoever is asked of the Father in the Name of the Son is granted to the member.

Christ, the true Source of all consolation, desires that His servants shall be fruitful ministers of consolation to those around them ; and that in their ministry they should be supported by the consciousness of His Father's power, and willingness, to answer all prayers addressed to Him in the Name of the Only-begotten Son.

We are not Apostles, but we share to a certain extent in Apostolic conditions and privileges.

1. We have all been called into the Catholic Church of Christ. He has chosen us ; we did not choose Him. "He did not choose men who were already good, but He makes good those whom He has chosen."
2. Through the Sacraments we have been
 - (i.) Admitted into the closest union with Him :
 - (ii.) "Endued with singular"—in the sense of particular—"gifts of the Holy Ghost."

We all have been endowed with the ordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost in Confirmation, the gifts suited to enable us to discharge the ordinary duties of life.

But in addition to these are the extraordinary gifts, given to men to enable them to discharge the responsibilities of distinct vocation.

The gifts are manifold, even as mankind is manifold ; manifold in variety, and in efficacy.

“ Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

“ For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom ; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit ; to another faith by the same Spirit.”

“ But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will.”

“ Leave us not, we beseech Thee, destitute of Thy manifold gifts, nor yet of grace to use them alway to Thy honour and glory.”

How much is implied in that final petition.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are given

1. To be diligently—“ alway ”—and obediently used.
“ If ye do *whatsoever* I command you.”
2. To be used for the honour and glory of God, from Whom cometh “ every good and perfect gift.”
3. To be used—we may infer from the example of St. Barnabas—for the consolation and help of those around us, especially our fellow-members in the body of Christ.

But, so to use the gifts of the Spirit, we need grace, daily, hourly grace, grace sought in Sacraments, and through prayer offered in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord—“ Leave us not destitute of grace.”

The consciousness of the responsibility of our position in the Kingdom of Christ, as endowed with the several gifts of the Spirit according to the Will of God, and as heirs of the inheritance of Saints and Apostles, constrains us to seek this grace with diligence and fervour.

Hence our approach to the Holy Eucharist, where we find Him Who is the Source and Fountain of all grace. From His Sacred Body there still proceeds the power to heal and to strengthen.

1. To heal.

As we draw near to Him Whose Love was so profound that it constrained Him to lay down His Life for us, and constrains Him still to bid us, as friends, approach Him, we become conscious of the infection of sin which has made us—

- (a) So grievously neglect the use of the gifts which, through His Spirit, we have received;
- (b) Render so little true service to our Master or to our brethren;
- (c) Live so entirely for our own gratification, and so little to His honour and glory.

First we become conscious of the wounds which sin has inflicted, and then grieved with our own ingratitude, and want of correspondence to His desire, we seek from Him the healing of our self-inflicted wounds.

“Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed.”

“I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord.”

2. To strengthen.

Great effort so often appears easy: it is the little continuous effort which is so hard to maintain.

To use the gifts of God for His glory *sometimes*, just after Communion, or Retreat, on special occasions, in illness or in sorrow, seems natural; to use them *always* is so difficult.

The sense of weakness, combined with repeated failures, is so depressing. We want encouragement, we say; we need pity, and take to pitying ourselves.

"Are the consolations of God small with thee?" They can only be small because we do not seek them with sufficient preparation or sufficient frequency. It is impossible they should be small in themselves, the fault must rest with us, if they seem so; because "The Lord's Hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither His Ear heavy that it cannot hear."

The remedy for depressed hope, the cure of weakness of effort, lies in regularity of approach to, and consequent quickened faith in, the Source of strength and the Fount of love.

In healing and in strength the Son of God manifests Himself as the Son of Consolation; not merely as the Supreme example of consolation, but as, in Himself, "Christus Consolator."

He visits us with consolation in order that, healed and strengthened, we may go forth from His Presence, and from union with Him, to "bring forth fruit," to prove ourselves "Christ's ones," to "cleave unto the Lord."

In Preparation—

Consider the Voice of Jesus saying to you, "My familiar friend hath lifted up his heel against Me."

In Communion—

Hear the Voice of Jesus saying to you, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."

In Thanksgiving—

"I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation."

St. John Baptist's Day

The Collect.—Almighty God, by Whose providence Thy servant John Baptist was wonderfully born, and sent to prepare the way of Thy Son our Saviour, by preaching of repentance; Make us so to follow his doctrine and holy life, that we may truly repent according to his preaching; and after his example constantly speak the truth, boldly rebuke vice, and patiently suffer for the truth's sake; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Epistle.—Isaiah xl. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. Luke i. 57.

“Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.” Such was the testimony of our Blessed Lord to the Saint whom we commemorate to-day.

Typified by Elias in the Old Testament, he was divinely appointed to be the forerunner of Christ. Sanctified in the womb, he, even before his birth, bore witness to the Presence of the Incarnate Son. Having preached the baptism of repentance he was permitted to baptize our Lord Himself, and to bear witness to Him as the Bridegroom and “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

To him was given joy when, as yet unborn, he recognised the Presence of the promised Saviour; to him was granted the joy of hearing “the Bridegroom’s Voice”; to him was granted the brightest crown of Beatitude in that he was “persecuted for righteousness’ sake.”

God's appointed time has come, and His purpose ordained from everlasting is about to be fulfilled. The Sun of righteousness is ready to burst through the clouds of darkness which have rested upon the world. "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God."

But before the glory of the Lord can be revealed, the work of preparation must be done : the Redeemer of Israel will not find His people unprepared. "The Mouth of the Lord" has foretold the coming of the forerunner ; the Word of the Lord stands for ever ; and Jerusalem is to hear the Voice of one that crieth in the wilderness, " Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

Note—

(i.) The description of the Forerunner—the Voice. He himself during his ministry, in humility, uses the same expression. "I am the Voice."

"That Voice," St. Augustine says, "united in itself the voices of all Patriarchs and Prophets that had gone before, being no less than that Voice which preceded the going forth of Him Who was the Word—the Word that was with God, and was God."

(ii.) The nature of the message.

The King is coming—"Behold your God ;" therefore, "prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

(iii.) The character of the preparation.

"Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain."

Then shall "the glory of the Lord be revealed."

What does it indicate but that the work of repentance

must be done before the Lord can take possession of the kingdom of man's soul, and before His glory can be manifested in the redeemed life?

The old dispensation was passing—"the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of God bloweth upon it: but the Word of our God"—the Word with His spiritual Kingdom—"shall stand for ever."

The Spirit of God moves upon the soul of man, breaking down the hard crust of indifference and sin; former things are passing away, and through His power repentance does its perfect work; Christ is expected, Christ takes possession of the soul, and the glory of Christ, as Lord of the soul of man, is revealed.

The Prophet appears as though uplifted on high, and calls on Zion to rejoice, to lift up her voice in the presence of the good tidings, and to trumpet forth the good news, "Behold your God."

It is the message of St. John the Baptist—"Behold the Lamb of God;" it is the message of the Apostles; it is the message of the Church to the end of time, as she declares the faith of the Incarnation, the faith in her divinely appointed Sacraments—"Behold your God."

And what a revelation follows! "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd, He shall gather the lambs with His Arm, and carry them in His Bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

"I am the Good Shepherd." In Christ all is fulfilled, and that Good Shepherd we find in the Blessed Sacrament, in which He comes to feed the sheep of His fold, to carry them safely in His gracious arms, to lead them, as their strength is able, in the paths of righteousness.

But to see Him as the Good Shepherd, to be capable of appreciation of His Gifts, there must be preparation, the

preparation of repentance in a soul softened by the breath of the Spirit blowing upon it.

The Gospel contains the narrative of the birth of him of whom Isaiah had prophesied.

In accordance with the announcement to Zacharias, Elizabeth, in her old age, bears a son, the promised Messenger, whose name is to be called John. Zacharias receives back his speech, of which for want of faith in the revelation made to him, he had been deprived, and makes use of it to utter praise to God.

"Fear," we read, "came on all that dwelt round about them; and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill-country of Judea. And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be?"

In the same way we read later, "The people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not."

It was all part of the preparation for the coming of the Son of God. A feeling of expectation was kindled, a reference to the well-known prophecies was aroused, and the hearts of men were drawn to look for the appearance of the promised Messiah.

The praise of Zachariah takes the form which is known to us as the "Benedictus," the Evangelical Canticle of the Matins Office, which heralds the Birth of the Incarnate Son.

Listen to the familiar words of the old man whose mind is stored with the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures. Illumined by the Holy Ghost, with heart prepared by the penance through which he has

passed, he proclaims the Evangel, the fulfilment of that which hitherto he has only dimly understood.

“Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel ;
For He hath visited and wrought redemption for
His people,
And hath raised up a horn of salvation for us,
In the house of his servant David,
(As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets
which have been since the world began),
Salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all
that hate us ;
To shew mercy towards our fathers,
And to remember his holy covenant ;
The oath which he sware unto Abraham our father.”

“If, as has been said, the Law is the Gospel hidden, and the Gospel is the Law revealed, we may observe that here, for the first time, the stream of Divine light seems to break in throughout this Prophetic Hymn, for all here is of that which is Evangelical, spiritual, heavenly and eternal.”¹

“To grant unto us that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies,”—those enemies of whom the enemies of Israel in the days of old were types and signs—

“Should serve Him without fear,
In holiness and righteousness before Him all our
days”—that is, in those “new heavens, and
new earth” of the Kingdom of God, “wherein
dwelleth righteousness.”

Zacharias sees the glories of the revelation, and then, as if arrested by the presence of the child before him, breaks off—

“Yea, and thou, child, shalt be called the prophet
of the Most High :
For thou shalt go before the Face of the Lord to
make ready His ways :

¹ Isaac Williams.

To give knowledge of salvation unto His people
 In the remission of their sins ;
 Because of the tender mercy (or Heart of mercy) of
 our God,
 Whereby the Dayspring from on high shall visit us,
 (or hath visited us),
 To shine upon them that sit in darkness and the
 shadow of death ;
 To guide our feet into the way of peace.” (R.V.)

“And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.” “Thus God works in secret, and by slow preparation, that all may wait and watch for Him in patience.”¹

The Collect—

- I. Summarises the salient points connected with the birth and mission of God’s servant, John Baptist.
 - (i.) By the providence of God he was “wonderfully born”;
 - (ii.) Sent to prepare the way of the Saviour, “the Son of God,”
 - (iii.) “By preaching of repentance.”
- II. Contains a petition for ourselves, that we may so
 - (i.) “Follow his doctrine and holy life,”
 - (ii.) “That we may truly repent according to his teaching,”
 - (iii.) “Constantly speak the truth,”
 - (iv.) “Boldly rebuke vice,”
 - (v.) “Patiently suffer for the truth’s sake.”
- (i.) The doctrine is placed first, followed by remem-

¹ Isaac Williams.

brance of the self-denial of the life, and the unsparing character of the teaching.

The doctrine of St. John is faith in the Incarnate Son—"Behold the Lamb of God." "This was He of Whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for He was before me." "Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth."

(ii.) The life—

As a Nazarite, he was to "drink neither wine nor strong drink"—the life of stern self-denial.

The teaching—

"Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance."

"Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."

(iii.) We are followers of Him Whose Name is "The Truth," and therefore are we bound to "speak every man truth with his neighbour."

(iv.) Vice is rampant in the world: the follower of Christ by life, and example, and if need be, by word, is boldly to uphold the banner of his Lord.

St. John "waxed strong in spirit." Strength and boldness can only come to us through the indwelling power of God the Holy Ghost.

(v.) Patience in suffering for the sake of Him Who is truth.

"Tribulation worketh patience." The chaff is winnowed away, the good seed of patience remains.

"Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious Power, unto all patience."

"Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience."

"But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

We, the servants of God, by the Providence of God wonderfully re-born into the Kingdom of His Son, draw near to the Altar to meet Him Who is the Heavenly Bridegroom, the Lamb of God, the King of Saints.

The battle against vice in ourselves and in the world is hard and long, and oftentimes all hope has seemed to have departed. Truth is so hard, and falsehood is so easy; the suffering is so keen, and patience is so difficult of acquisition.

“Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God.” “The warfare is accomplished,” for “I have overcome the world.”

Hearken to the good tidings which sound from the Altar.

“The Word of our God shall stand for ever.”

“I am with you always.”

“Emmanuel, God with us.”

“Behold your God.”

“He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His Arms, and carry them in His Bosom.”

“The Day-spring from on high hath visited us; To give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death: and to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

All is fulfilled to us in the most Holy Sacrament. Our God is there, His glory is there, His tender Heart is there, His will to feed us, to sustain us, to be our Light, our Guide, our Peace—all is there.

Oh, marvel of marvels, greatest wonder of the Love of God, that God should stoop so low, should be so near at hand, should descend to reveal such mysteries of grace and love to us poor sinners, should bid us draw near to share in this miracle of grace.

“Prepare my soul to meet Him.”

The Bride must be made ready to meet the Heavenly Bridegroom: the guests must be duly appareled before they sit down at the Heavenly Banquet; the Upper Chamber must be "furnished and prepared."

How? "Make straight in the desert a highway for our God." "Every valley" must "be exalted, and every mountain and hill be made low, and the crooked straight, and the rough places plain," and *then* "shall the glory of the Lord be revealed."

All the glory of His Incarnate Life, of His humility, His tenderness, His strength, His comfort—all shall be revealed to thee as thou, in thy penitence, dost stretch forth thy hands to Him, and receive of Him that Gift, the wonders of which the mind of man cannot conceive.

"Very Bread, Good Shepherd, tend us;
Jesu, of Thy love befriend us;
Thou refresh us, Thou defend us;
Thine eternal goodness send us,
In the land of life to see:
Thou Who all things canst and knowest,
Who on earth such Food bestowest,
Grant us with Thy Saints, though lowest,
Where the heavenly Feast Thou shovest,
Fellow heirs and guests to be."

In Preparation—

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

"Examine diligently thy conscience, and to the utmost of thy power purify and cleanse it with true contrition and humble confession, so as there may be nothing in thee that may be burdensome unto thee, or that may breed in thee remorse of conscience, and hinder thy free access to the Throne of Grace."¹

¹ Thomas à Kempis.

In *Communion*—

“Behold your God.”

“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures ; He leadeth me beside the still waters.”

In *Thanksgiving*—

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel : for He hath visited, and redeemed His people.”

St. Peter's Day

The Collect.—O Almighty God, Who by Thy Son Jesus Christ didst give to Thy Apostle Saint Peter many excellent gifts, and commandedst him earnestly to feed Thy flock ; Make, we beseech Thee, all Bishops and Pastors diligently to preach Thy holy Word, and the people obediently to follow the same, that they may receive the crown of everlasting glory ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Acts xii. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. xvi. 13.

“ O Almighty God,” we pray, “ Who by Thy Son Jesus Christ didst give to Thy Apostle St. Peter many excellent gifts.”

God is the Giver, by His dear Son. To St. Peter, called to be an Apostle, were given many excellent gifts, and in the exercise of those gifts he was commanded “ earnestly to feed the flock ” of the Great Shepherd.

The commission, and the bestowal of the gifts, form the subject of the Gospel ; but in the Collect our thoughts are led to another portion of St. Peter's history, the earnest exhortation which his Lord made to him to feed the lambs and the sheep of His flock, as a proof of his love after his repentance and restoration.

It was for this object that he was released from prison by the Angel, as we read in the Epistle : it is for this that his feet are set upon the Rock—that He may carry on his Master's own work upon earth.

It was in his fulfilment of this thrice-repeated charge that he was found worthy of the crown of martyrdom, and his chains were transformed into a crown.

He hands down to the Church of all time the charge which he had himself received—

“Feed the flock of God which is among you, and when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”

How often we notice the same thing. The crown is promised, the light of the promised glory can be discerned, but—there must be first the Cross, the chains, the self-discipline, before the crown can be attained.

“Make, we beseech Thee, all Bishops and Pastors diligently to preach Thy Holy Word”; to preach Him Who is the Word, in all fulness; as the Chief Corner-Stone of the heavenly Temple; as God manifest in the Flesh, Very God and Very Man, in Whom “two whole and perfect Natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in One Person, never to be divided.”

We want “the Faith, the whole Faith, and nothing but the Faith”:

No man, however long his life, will ever exhaust the treasures of the Catholic Faith. Diligent study of the Faith, and devotion to Him Who is the foundation of the Faith, will lead to diligent instruction of those committed to the charge of the priesthood.

So shall the people find life in their souls, and be drawn “obediently to follow the same, that they may receive the crown of everlasting glory.”

How great is the responsibility of those on whom rests the care of souls; how fervent ought to be the prayers of all members of Christ’s Church that they may be worthy of

their high calling, and be found ready to give account of the souls committed to their charge.

“Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?”

“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

Compare the two sayings as addressed to shepherds of Christ's flock.

We take the Gospel first, as containing the commission of St. Peter and the bestowal of the “excellent gifts.”

We must think of St. Peter as he was, and as, through grace, he became; the natural man transformed into Cephas, the stone.

Our Blessed Lord asks His disciples, “Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?”

Note His own claim. “The confession on the part of Christ is that He is the Son of Man; the confession on the part of man must be that He is the Son of God; on both of these together is His Church founded and built up;—the Son of God upon earth, the Son of Man in heaven.”

The aim of our Lord's enquiry was to elicit a true confession concerning Himself. “Whom do *men* say that I am?” “Flesh and blood” had not discovered the one great truth, the truth of all truths; the world was, and is still, in error.

“Ye,” He would seem to say, “Ye have seen My works and listened to My teaching, Whom say *ye* that I am?”

“Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ the Son of the Living God.” And Simon Peter's clear

confession of our Lord's Person and Office, won for him the blessing—

“Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona : for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father Which is in heaven.”

It is not for us, in our preparation for communion, to enter into matters of controversial interpretation. The blessing rests upon St. Peter because of his confession of his faith in Jesus as the Incarnate Son of God.

We will take the explanation of St. Augustine. “On this declaration of thine, this confession of faith in Me as the Son of God, will I, as on a Rock, build My Church : and thou also art called the Rock, as maintaining this faith revealed unto thee from above.”

“Thou therefore art Peter (*Petrus*), and upon this Rock (*Petram*), which thou hast confessed, upon this Rock (*Petram*) which thou hast recognised, saying, ‘Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God,’ will I build My Church. That is upon Myself, the Son of the Living God, will I build My Church.”

“And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.”

“The Keys in Scripture are badges of power and trust, and were given to stewards and treasurers, who had power of excluding and admitting, of opening stores and dispensing them.”

After the Ascension St. Peter exercised this power by admitting into the Church the Jewish Converts, and the first-fruits of the Gentiles, in the person of Cornelius.

In a secondary sense the promise is made to the Church. The power of loosing and binding was by our Lord conferred after His Resurrection upon all the Apostles, and is handed on to all those who, in the faith of the Incarnation,

are called to the office of the priesthood, and therein to exercise of the Ministry of reconciliation.

The Epistle shows us the power of true faith in the Incarnation, and the power of the grace of the Incarnate Son in the transformation of the lives of His members.

Ten years have elapsed in the history of the Church ; the sword of the persecutor has attacked her but has not weakened her faith. She lives, she works, she prays, founded as she is on the faith of the Incarnation.

St. Peter, the self-reliant, the man of impulses, the confessor and yet the denier of his Lord, whose love and faith have been purified, and who in the grace of his Lord has been rooted and established, is called on to bear witness even, as it seems probable, unto death.

Founded on the Rock his faith remains unshaken. On the night before his expected martyrdom he sleeps in calm reliance upon the Lord Whom he had confessed.

Compare the passionate assertion and resistance, of ten years ago, with the patient acceptance, now, of coming death ; contemplate the freedom, even amidst chains, from thought of self ; the divine strength manifested in human weakness.

“Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and the keepers before the door kept the prison.”

“He that keepeth thee will not sleep. Behold He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.”

“Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels ?” So had our Lord spoken to St. Peter in the Garden of Gethsemane, and now He sends one of those angels to effect the deliverance of His faithful servant.

"Behold the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison ; and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly."

The chains fall from the prisoner's hands ; in obedience he girds himself, puts on his sandals, casts his garments about him, and follows the heavenly messenger. It all seemed to St. Peter as a vision.

"He wist not that it was true which was done by the Angel."

"When they were passed the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city, which opened to them of its own accord."

"And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent His Angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews."

We must not lose sight of one detail in this wonderful deliverance.

"Peter was kept in prison ; but *prayer* was made *without ceasing* of the Church unto God for him."

The ceaseless stream of the Church's intercession was rising before God for the imprisoned Apostle. Strong was his faith in the Head of the Church, and strong was the faith of his brethren, of those concerning whom His Lord had said, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

We are members of the Church of God, which is rooted and grounded in the Faith of His Incarnate Son—"built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Corner-Stone."

In that Church we do "all eat the same spiritual meat, and all drink the same spiritual drink," for we all drink of

that spiritual Rock which follows us, and "that Rock" is "Christ."

The world knows Him not : men still explain His Life and account for His works in accordance with their own imaginations and ideas. But the Father has revealed to us the mystery of His divine purpose in the Incarnation of His Son. Flesh and blood has not revealed Him to us, but His Father which is in heaven. Thanks be to God for the priceless gift of that revelation.

In the revelation of the Incarnation is included the revelation of the marvels of the Sacramental Life of Jesus ; that Life which, through the power of the Holy Ghost, He lives in the midst of His Body the Church, and whereby He sustains, and strengthens, and nourishes the spiritual lives of His members.

He asks of us, as He asked of His Apostles, a true confession of our faith. "*Men* say, but what say ye? Ye, who have been grafted into Me by Baptism, strengthened and illumined by My Spirit, who have seen My mighty works of grace, and been admitted into closest fellowship with Myself, what say *ye*?"

Do we possess that clear doctrinal knowledge of the Son of Man, the Son of God, which shall enable us boldly and truly to confess Him before men ; have we that faith which is capable of expression in words, willing to find expression in our actions ?

Perhaps we own to our weakness, the frailty and imperfection of our faith so far. We believe, but more as ■ matter of tradition, than of education and experience. Our faith in the Son of God when tested by trial, by disappointment, by opposition, fails us. We are afraid, we are ashamed, to bear witness, to acknowledge ourselves followers of the Lord Jesus.

Is it so? "My grace is sufficient for thee." The effort to confess Christ will be followed by the grace to confess Him, and the confession will be followed by ever-increasing knowledge, strength, and blessing.

For *all*, be their trials what it may, of doubt, fear, suffering, the bondage of sin—it matters not—the Church pleads day by day the all-availing sacrifice. Prayer is "made without ceasing of the Church unto God" for them.

"We most humbly beseech Thee of Thy goodness, O Lord, to comfort and succour all them, who in this transitory life are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity."

And the prayers of the Church, united as she is with Christ her Head, offered and presented by Christ Himself before the Father's Throne, avail much. The angel of deliverance still is sent forth to set the prisoner free, to accomplish that which, but for faith, would seem impossible.

Have we never found it so? Have we never seen the efficacy of the Church's prayer? Have we never experienced the power of the grace of God in the deliverance of our own souls?

We were in bondage, and we knew not how—it seemed to us as a dream—we were set free. The chains dropped off: we rose from our slumber, we girded ourselves with self-denial, and the gates which had shut us in seemed to open to us of their own accord, and we went forth free men into the City of God.

Whence come such miracles? we ask. From the Altar of the Lord in His Church. The prayers rise, the sacrifice is pleaded, Jesus is with His Church. Faith beholds Him, faith discerns His Presence and His Power.

Men deny or seek to explain away, but faith sees and knows that Jesus, Son of Man and Son of God, He Whom

St. Peter confessed, and in Whom we believe, is fulfilling to us His own words of Love—"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

In Preparation—

"Arise up quickly"; bestir thyself, and the chains which bind thee to earth shall fall off from thy hands. "Gird thyself" with self-denial and penance, and thou shalt be enabled to follow whither the voice of God's messenger calls thee. He leads thee into the Holy City and there He waits for thee upon His Altar Throne.

In Communion—

He waits for thy confession—

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

In Thanksgiving—

Ask for faith and grace to say—

"Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee."

And yet—

"Beware of Peter's word, nor confidently say

'I never will deny Thee, Lord!' but—'Grant I never may.'"

—COWPER.

St. James the Apostle

The Collect.—Grant, O merciful God, that as Thine holy Apostle Saint James, leaving his father and all that he had, without delay was obedient unto the calling of Thy Son Jesus Christ, and followed Him ; so we, forsaking all worldly and carnal affections, may be evermore ready to follow Thy holy commandments ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Acts xi. 27 and part of chap. xii. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. xx. 20.

The Collect tells us of the characteristics of St. James's life ; the Epistle of his death ; the Gospel of his preparation for that death.

It is man's character which is the all-important feature of his life ; not merely what he did, or what he suffered, but the spirit in which he acted and suffered, and the impress which his circumstances and sufferings left upon him.

The circumstances of a man's death are of small importance compared with the character of his life.

“He killed James, the brother of John, with the sword.” How short is the record ! He “was obedient unto the calling of Thy Son Jesus Christ, and followed Him.” That example, that testimony lives still, and is the strength and help of Christ's servants to the end of time.

Note the steps in the life of Christ's servants. St. James—

- I. "Without delay was obedient unto the calling of Thy Son Jesus Christ ;"
- II. *Left* his father and all that he had ;
- III. "Followed Him"—wherever the Master went, he went ;
- IV. Became "Thine holy Apostle."

The work of sanctification was carried out in following, and he who left all for Christ was fitted *to be sent* to others who should by him be brought into the heavenly way.

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the *Apostle* and High Priest of our profession, Jesus Christ."

I. Every member of the Body of Christ, "the called of Jesus," has his, or her, individual vocation. Christ appoints the particular sphere or work, and to that sphere or work He calls us. "Son, go work to-day in My Vineyard."

There is the call to the Religious life ;

the call to the Priestly life ;

the call to the active life, or to the life of contemplation ; to the life of religious work, or to the life of prayer.

There is the call to life of business and discharge of worldly duty ; "Not slothful in business, serving the Lord."

There is the call to married life, and to the fulfilment of family and domestic duties.

"Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."

"As He Which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." ("All manner of living." R.V.)

If the life be the life of health, it is to be used, whatever our position, for the glory of God the Giver.

If the life be one of suffering, it is to be lived in union with, and for the glory of, the Divine Sufferer of Calvary.

“Ye shall indeed drink of My Cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with.”

Pray—

- (a) For grace to recognise your vocation.
- (b) For grace willingly to obey the divine call when you realise it.

II. Obedience involves the giving up of whatever hinders surrender to the heavenly Voice.

St. James gave up “his father and all that he had.” The call to some of us may be to surrender of earthly ties, and to acceptance of the life of poverty.

It may be to a life of self-sacrifice, the giving up our own desires and our own will, of forgetfulness of self, in the effort to promote the good or happiness of others.

“I heard Thy Voice in the garden, and I was afraid ; and I hid myself.”

It is the attitude of the natural man when first he hears the call of God : he fears, and he shrinks from the demands which may be made upon him.

III. But the fear and the shrinking, the pain of self-denial, and the apparent impossibilities, are overcome by the vision of the Person Who calls.

Blind Bartimaeus without delay obeyed the call, and having received his sight, “followed Jesus in the way.”

The Apostles, when they had received the call, followed Jesus, and in following “saw no man save Jesus only.”

Whatever be the path of life to which we may be called, we shall find in it the Footprints of the Master, if only, lovingly and carefully, we look for them.

"The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."

There are the Footprints in the life of service and of self-crucifixion for the good of others.

Consider—

- (a) The privilege,
- (b) The blessedness,
- (c) The ultimate glory

of following Jesus.

"If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be."

"These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth."

IV. He who gave up, and who followed, became the Apostle of Christ, one sent to be the servant and minister of others, to be the messenger to them of the Gospel of salvation.

"So we, forsaking all worldly and carnal affections, may be evermore ready to follow Thy holy commandments."

The life of self-denial and of following is the true witness of Christ. That life is within the power of all; therefore all may share, to a certain extent, in the privileges of apostleship, being witnesses to and messengers of the heavenly King.

"No man liveth to himself." In following Christ he is to go forth out of self, and to be willing to be sent, or used, for the good of others.

In the Gospel we read, "Then came the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping Him, and desiring a certain thing of Him."

The desire was for self-assertion, for prominence in the Kingdom ; but they who follow Christ must abandon "all worldly and carnal affections," and must accept that which He sees best for them.

"Ye know not what ye ask." It is so true of many of our requests, which, if granted, would bring no true benefit to us.

Christ knew that for them, as for us, if there be no cross there can be no crown.

"Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto Him, we are able."

And that offering of their willingness and ability to suffer He accepts. "But to sit on My right hand, and on My left, is not Mine to give: but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father."

Enough for them to follow, to be admitted to the fellowship of His sufferings: the reward is in the hands of the All-righteous Father—"My Father and your Father."

The end of the earthly life of following, the fulfilment of the promise in this world, was attained in the obscure death of martyrdom, of which the Epistle tells us.

St. James was the first of the Apostolic band to suffer martyrdom, but note the special preparation granted.

(i.) The witnessing of the raising of the daughter of Jairus.

What could so sustain him in his own last hour of pain and agony as the remembrance of the Master's power over death?

(ii.) The Transfiguration.

He was, like the Master, to lay down his life among surroundings of shame and hatred. But there would

be before his mind the vision of the glory of which he had been witness, of the glory which was his Lord's, and to which, by the path of suffering, he was to be admitted.

(iii.) The Agony in the Garden.

He was allowed to witness his Master's Agony, and in his own suffering that memory would assure him of the perfect and all-powerful sympathy of his now glorified Lord.

By granting him the privilege of being one of the three chosen witnesses of these scenes in His own life, Christ was preparing His servant, St. James, for the drinking of that Cup which he had professed himself able and willing to receive.

It was the preparation of love, the ministry of Divine foreknowledge.

And to us too, as we approach the Altar of God, the call comes—"Follow Me." For there we find Jesus,

- (i.) Who, in the Incarnation, left His Father, and the joys of the Unity of the Divine Being, in order that He might put on the form of a servant, and minister to the salvation of those whom He made His brethren.
- (ii.) Who, in the Eucharist, perpetuates that life of ministry, serving us in loyal humility that He may fit us for the work of following Him.

There He shows to us the emblems of His Passion ; there is re-presented that Sacrifice whereby He gave His life a ransom for many : there He makes us partakers of that Body broken and that Blood outpoured, which are to be our sustenance as we follow in His steps.

There, in the continual remembrance of His Death, He

seeks to prepare us for that death which awaits every man, in obedience to His command.

Each Communion with its unveiling to faith of the mysteries of His power, His Glory, and His sympathy, therein contained, should be one step forward in our preparation for the vision of His Presence in death.

We know not the day nor the hour; but God knows, and God prepares because God loves, and would have no man found unready.

The Voice speaks to us from the Altar, calling, ever calling us to fresh efforts, deeper reality, more perfect devotion.

“Can ye drink of My cup?” Your own thoughts and desires must be put aside; it is of My Cup you must drink, if you would be truly Mine.

We look up, and on the Altar we behold the Cross, and on the Cross the Figure of Jesus Crucified, with Arms outstretched to draw His people nigh, and to fold them in His Love. And then—we answer hardly daring to say the words, as we receive Him to ourselves, “We are able.”

Pray for grace—

- I. (a) To hear the Voice which calls thee;
- (b) Without delay to obey faithfully the holy commandments of Him Who calls.
- II. For illumination to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, Who in the Eucharist bids thee to drink of His Cup and to follow Him in the path of life.
- III. “Ask for no sensible gifts of grace, but lay thy necessities before thy Lord, praying Him to

give and withhold whatever shall be most to His glory.”¹

- IV. Seek so to use your opportunities of Communion that you may be prepared for the final call in death.

¹ “A Year of Eucharists.”

St. Bartholomew the Apostle

The Collect.—“O Almighty and Everlasting God, Who didst give to Thine Apostle Bartholomew grace truly to believe and preach Thy Word; Grant, we beseech Thee, unto Thy Church, to love that Word which he believed, and both to preach and receive the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Acts v. 12. *The Gospel.*—St. Luke xxii. 24.

The history of St. Bartholomew is veiled in obscurity. We know nothing of his original call, nothing of his life while following Christ, and, except through tradition, nothing of his subsequent work and death.

The life hidden in Christ, of which humility is the crowning characteristic, is the life of God's greatest saints.

The lives of faith, humility, and love, too obscure for the world's notice, are the most precious in the sight of God.

What a contrast there is between the judgment of God on the lives around us, and the judgment of the world.

Which judgment is the more important in *our* eyes? Which life do *we* strive to live—the life noted and admired by the world, or the life approved by our “Father which seeth in secret”?

It has usually been supposed that St. Bartholomew is the same person as Nathaniel (St. John i. 45 to end), but strong

as may be the reasons in support of such a supposition, the testimony of the Fathers is opposed to it.

How strange that only the *name* of one of the immediate followers of Christ, of one of the chosen Twelve, should be recorded in the Gospel. What a lesson of humility!

But, “In this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.”

“And the wall of the City”—the heavenly Jerusalem—“had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb.”

Tradition says that St. Bartholomew was of noble birth and wealthy position, and this idea is perpetuated by the Gospel for the day, recording the consequent “strife” among the Apostles, as to “which of them should be accounted the greatest”—in their Master’s expected kingdom.

Consider—

- I. The Person of Him Who teaches His Disciples:
- II. The tenderness of His teaching:
- III. The force of His example.

I. It is the Only-Begotten Son, “Who being in the Form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant.”

II. The Servant of His brethren, He teaches them the lesson of humility. “He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve:”

“For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as He that serveth.”

III. Hardly, when the words were spoken, did the disciples understand the fulness of the humility and condescension of their Master, for their eyes were not opened. But at least they had seen the evidences of His power, listened to His wisdom, experienced His love.

His claim to be their "Lord and Master" was familiar to them, repeated as it was at the Last Supper.

"Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am."

"I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."

"I am among you as He that serveth."

But through the life of service, humbly and faithfully rendered, shall be attained exaltation, in union with Christ, in His Spiritual Kingdom.

"Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations." There must be union in suffering if there is to be union in glory.

Consider the mystery of Christ's life of *continual temptations*.

We know only of the temptation in the Wilderness. His words imply daily, hourly, trials or temptations, felt with a keenness of which we have no comprehension.

The reward of faithful continuance with Christ in trials—

"I appoint (I covenant) unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me."

"That ye may eat and drink at My Table in My kingdom, and sit (ye shall sit) on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

"It is observable that the *sitting on thrones* is mentioned after the admission to *sit* at the Table."¹

¹ Wordsworth,

The Collect tells us of the Almighty and Everlasting God, the Source and Origin of all goodness and grace.

God gave to St. Bartholomew the grace wherewith :—

- (a) To believe.
- (b) To preach “Thy Word.”

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

In that Word the grace of God, illuminating the mind of the future Apostle, enabled him to believe.

In the strength of God’s grace he was able to follow the Word “made Flesh.”

By the power of God’s grace, being filled with faith and devotion, he became a witness to the Word, “to the uttermost part of the earth.”

“Grant, we beseech Thee, unto Thy Church”—the “One Catholick and Apostolick Church”—“to *love* that Word which he believed, and both to preach and receive the same.”

The Church is founded on faith in the Incarnate Son. *Love* is the key-note of her service. Because, indwelt by the Spirit of God, she believes in the fulness of the revelation of God, therefore she *must* be bound to Him in Whom she believes by the cords of love.

Loving, she cannot remain silent. She must, by virtue of her love and of her divine commission, bear witness to Him in Whom she believes.

“Preach and receive the same.” The old Salisbury Collect has only “Amare quod credidit, et prædicare quod docuit”—to love what he believed, and to preach what he taught.

Perhaps to “preach,” refers to the Church collectively, and to those called to ministerial office : to “receive,” to

the individual members, to those brought by the ministry of the Word into her communion and fellowship, that they may “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.”

The Epistle tells of the work of the Church as carried on by the Apostles, and throughout succeeding generations.

The Church changes not, being founded on the Rock, Christ Jesus. Her commission is the same; her inherent power, as the Body of Christ, the same; her work the same, in every age and every land.

“By the hands of the Apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people.”

It is so still. “The Lord’s Hand is not shortened that it cannot save.” The “signs” of God’s grace working through the Sacraments of His Church are still to be seen by the eye of faith, and “wonders” are still “wrought among the people” in the restoration of fallen souls, and the upholding of the feeble and tempted.

“Believers” are still, through the ministry and preaching of “the Word,” “added to the Lord.” The growth of the Church depends upon the faithfulness of the witness borne by its members.

The souls sick with sin, and those “ vexed with the unclean spirits” of pride, passion, and desire, are brought by Christ’s faithful servants within the over-shadowing Presence of the Divine Healer, and quickened by His grace, are “healed every one.”

Humility, faith, love, are henceforth the only badges of honour. Mutual service in the Name of the Master, becomes the characteristic of the redeemed life.

"He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve."

All we have, and all we are, comes from Him Who meets us in the Eucharist on the festival of His Apostle and saintly Martyr, Bartholomew.

He gave up all for Christ; was willing to be emptied of earthly honour and repute, and Christ gave to him the fulness of His grace.

That fulness still is stored in Him Who calls us to Himself. The measure of reception is our fitness to receive.

There must be the three notes:—

1. Faith.
2. Humility.
3. Love.

We are brought face to face with the Object of our faith, and, in the Blessed Sacrament, we have presented to us—

- (a) The fulfilment of His Own words—"I am among you as He that serveth."
- (b) The example of His humility.
- (c) The highest appeal to our love.
- (d) The assurance of His ability to heal the diseases of our soul, and to supply our utmost need.

"*I am among you.*" Having *His* Presence we have all.

Contemplate the marvel of Jesus serving us, His brethren, in the Eucharist.

How can we be proud, self-seeking, unloving, in the Presence of such humility and love?

Through our union with Him, our trials become His trials, our temptations His temptations.

He can say to us, "I have continued with you in your temptations," for never has He left us or ceased to care for us.

How marvellous is the retrospect; that when we thought we were alone in our temptations, He, the once tempted but victorious King, was close beside us, watching, waiting, hoping for our victory.

But what can we say? Have we been faithful in continuance? Have we remained faithful in the trials which His Body the Church experiences?

Have we sought to make reparation to Him for the dishonour done to Him through unfaith and sin, in the Blessed Sacrament?

Do we eat and drink at His Table here, with such preparation of soul and body, that we may be looking forward hopefully to sitting down at the Heavenly Banquet in His eternal kingdom?

"Give unto God that which is God's, and ascribe unto thyself that which is thine own; that is, give thanks to God for His grace; and acknowledge that to thyself is to be attributed nothing, but only sin, and the punishment due to sin."

"The chiefest Saints before God, are the least in their own judgments; and the more glorious they are, so much the humbler within themselves."

"He that desireth to keep the grace of God, let him be thankful for grace given, and patient for the taking away thereof: let him pray that it may return: let him be cautious and humble, lest he lose it."

"O Jesus, King of Saints, fill me with the grace of Thine Own Humility, and so inflame my heart with Thine Own Divine Love, that I may be consumed with desire to eat and drink at Thy Table in Thy Kingdom."¹

¹ Thomas à Kempis.

St. Matthew the Apostle

The Collect.—O Almighty God, Who by Thy Blessed Son, didst call Matthew from the receipt of custom to be an Apostle and Evangelist; Grant us grace to forsake all covetous desires, and inordinate love of riches; and to follow the same Thy Son Jesus Christ, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, One God, world without end. Amen.

The Epistle.—2 Cor. iv. 1. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. ix. 9.

The power of the call of Christ, and of the grace of Christ. Matthew the Publican becomes St. Matthew the Apostle.

Consider the possibilities for us which such a record involves—"To God all things are possible."

"I *cannot* do—this or that. I cannot resist the temptations to which my position exposes me. I cannot bear patiently that which I have to suffer. I cannot bear my cross."

So *we* say, and God speaking through His Saints replies—"My grace is sufficient for thee."

The festival of St. Matthew follows that of St. Bartholomew, and there seems a certain connection, or sequence in the Collects.

To St. Bartholomew was given grace truly to believe and to preach. St. Matthew goes a step further. Not only is

he given faith to believe, but also to renounce that which would have hindered.

Not only did he preach the Word, but he was called to put on record the life, the words, the acts of the Word made Flesh.

The Gospel contains St. Matthew's own account of his call. He was, though a Jew, a tax-gatherer under the Roman government, and in pursuance of his occupation—one affording frequent opportunities of extortion—was “sitting at the receipt of custom.”

To him, apparently suddenly and unexpectedly, in the midst of his business, came the call of Jesus—“Follow Me.”

Only two words—and yet, sufficient to change entirely the life of a man of the world, a man immersed in business and its attractions.

Only two words—the beginning of a new life, in which he was to go onwards, first to the Apostolate, then to the work of the first Evangelist, finally to the glory of martyrdom. Throughout he was following Jesus.

It may be that the ground had been prepared by the knowledge of Christ's miracles, and by listening to His teaching; the effect of His Personal attraction, and the power of His command are manifested in the immediate obedience of St. Matthew.

The Son of Man had not where to lay His Head, and yet at His bidding the man of wealth and position gives up home and riches, to “follow” whithersoever the Master's Steps may lead.

Think of what the “giving up,” and what the unknown “following,” involved.

"And it came to pass as Jesus sat at meat in the house." St. Matthew in humility refrains from mentioning that it was his own house, as narrated by the other Evangelists.

St. Luke mentions that it was "a great feast" which was prepared for Christ: so that St. Matthew evidently left much in obedience to the call.

At once he seems to enter into the spirit of his Lord, for "many publicans and sinners"—the despised and the sinful—came, and "sat down with Him and His disciples."

And when the self-righteous, the Pharisees, saw it, they demanded of His disciples: "Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?"

Why indeed? Because, Love, ardent and eternal, constrained Him; because He came to seek and to save that which by the world was outcast, but in which He saw the possibilities of good.

He knew the sickness, the disease of each human soul; He knew that they *needed* a Physician: He came to minister to them salvation.

Their hope lay in the consciousness of their needs; those who think themselves whole have no perception of their need of a physician.

"I will have"—I desire—"mercy and not sacrifice," i.e. mercy rather than sacrifice; sacrifice without mercy is vain.

"A Hebrew use of the negative in order to bring out more forcibly the need and value of *the one thing*, which is contrasted with, and preferred to another, good in itself, and even prescribed by God, as sacrifice was."¹

"I came not to call the righteous," i.e. those who think

¹ Wordsworth, *in loco*.

themselves righteous, "but sinners," *i.e.* those who confess themselves sinners, "to repentance."

Where do we stand? Among those who profess themselves righteous, or among those who confess themselves sinners?

Surely, in our approach to the Holy Eucharist, among the latter class—"This Man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."

But for that there would be no place found for us. Sinners we are, and conscious of our need as sinners, we come to the Great Physician, that cleansed by Him, we may eat of His Bread, and drink of His Cup.

The Collect recalls to us the Unity of Being in the Divine Godhead. Christ called St. Matthew, but it was the Almighty God Who by His Blessed Son called him. Both are true and are parts of a mighty truth.

The prayer is for ourselves whom God has equally called out of the world into the Kingdom of His Son—

"Grant us grace to forsake all covetous desires, and inordinate love of riches, and to follow the same Thy Son Jesus Christ."

Note—

- (1) The hindrances we meet with in obeying the call;
 - (2) To what we are called; not a code of laws, but the following of Jesus Christ.
- (1) Covetousness and the love of money.

Listen to the words of Christ and His Apostles—

"He said unto them, Take heed and beware of covetousness."

“ Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth ; . . . covetousness, which is idolatry.”

“ Let your conversation be without covetousness,” or, “ Be ye free from the love of money.” (R.V.)

“ The love of money is the root of all evil.”

“ What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul.”

We may forget, but we cannot alter, the verdict of God upon the sin of covetousness, which enwraps the soul, deadens its aspiration, and hinders its obedience to the voice of God.

“ In whom,” says the Epistle, “ the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, Who is the Image of the Invisible God, should shine unto them.”

Examine self, under the light of the Holy Spirit, as to its presence in, and hold upon, your life.

(2) That to which you are called is to “ follow ” Jesus Christ.

“ Remembering always that Baptism doth represent unto us our profession ; which is to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto Him.”

The Cross is the sign of our profession, and where the Cross leads Christ’s soldiers are bound to follow.

It is no code of rules or abstract laws of morality which we are called on to follow. It is a Person Who calls, and a Person, Whom loving, we are to follow.

“ We preach,” says the Epistle, “ not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. For God . . . hath shined in our

hearts, to give the light of the glory of God, in the Face of Jesus Christ."

The Voice which calls you has not lost its authority, nor its constraining power. It admits of no parleying, and of no delay. Once heard it must be obeyed, in spite of hindrances. It says to thee, "Follow Me."

Remember He Who speaks is "Jesus Christ, Who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, One God, world without end."

Dare we fail in obedience when *He* calls?

And the Voice never ceases to speak and to call us. It is the Voice of Him Who in obedience to the Father's Will, forsaking the riches of the heavenly glory, "came down from Heaven, and was made Man."

From the humblest Altar, in humility veiling His Sacred Presence, He still calls His people, by the attraction of His Love, by the power of His Example, by the pleading of His Spirit—"Follow Me."

His Life, whether on earth, or in the Eucharist, is the Example: His Life, communicated in the Blessed Sacrament, is the power through which His people are to obey and to follow.

We walk in the darkness of this world, with eyes dimmed by the god of this world, and with feet entangled by the snares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches; to us from the Altar shines forth the radiance of Heavenly Love and Holy Poverty, of victorious Sacrifice and yearning desire. "Come, take up thy Cross, and follow Me."

As it shines "in our hearts," we feel the pulsations of responsive desire, "I will follow Thee, but—" "I would

follow Thee, but—I cannot break through the bonds which so long have held me”—“I see what I ought to do, but—I cannot do it yet. Give me time, and I will follow.”

No. “He arose and followed Him.” “God, Who hath promised indulgence to thy repentance, has not promised a to-morrow to thy delay.”

Did St. Matthew know what purpose Christ had in calling him? Can we see what His Divine knowledge has in store for us to suffer or to do? Enough that He calls, because He has need of us.

“I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

He calls us out of the sins of worldliness and neglect, into the light of His Presence, that we, beholding the light of the glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ, may be changed by His grace from sinners into saints.

A long process, you say. Yes, but God’s Love is boundless and His power infinite.

At least recognise this truth—

“The law of our being is that the more we give the more we love; the more we forget ourselves in the service we render, the happier the rendering of that service becomes, and the richer its fruit.”¹

In drawing near to the altar,

I. Pray for the illuminating power of His Holy Spirit, that by faith beholding the wonders of the Love of Jesus in the Eucharist, you may “forsake all other, and keep thee only unto Him.”

II. “Ask that in Communion thine ears may receive the

¹ Canon Edmund Venables.

tones of the Divine Voice, and hearken not to the clamour or the whispers of the world."

III. Pray that the words of love may be written and engraved upon thy heart, and that having received the heavenly treasure, thou mayst have grace to persevere in following Jesus.

St. Michael and All Angels

The Collect.—O Everlasting God, Who hast ordained and constituted the services of Angels and men in a wonderful order: Mercifully grant, that as Thy Holy Angels always do Thee service in heaven, so by Thy appointment they may succour and defend us on earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Rev. xii. 7. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. xviii. 1.

The Holy Angels have for many centuries been commemorated in the Church from a deeply rooted belief in (*a*) their communion with the Saints, and (*b*) their ministrations among mankind on earth.

(*a*) “Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the City of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of Angels; to the general assembly and Church of the first-born.”

(R.V. margin has: “And to innumerable hosts, the general assembly of Angels, and the Church of the first-born.”)

(*b*) “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”

The fact of the existence of the Holy Angels and their relationship to God and Man is part of the Divine revelation in the various books of both the Old and New Testament.

"The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of Angels."

"And all the Angels stood round about the throne, and about the Elders and the Four Beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God."

"Behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the Angels of God ascending and descending on it"—in fulfilment of their ministry to men, in obedience to the Will of God, the Father of men and of angels.

"There is joy in the presence of the Angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

Specially we must notice the connection of the Holy Angels with the Incarnate Son of God, Perfect God and Perfect Man.

"When He bringeth the First-Begotten into the world He saith, And let all the Angels of God worship Him."

Angels waited upon the Son of Man at His Nativity, and at His Resurrection: He condescended to accept their ministrations in His Temptation, and in His Agony.¹

"Thinkest thou that I cannot beseech My Father, and He shall even now send Me more than twelve legions of angels?" (R.V.)

At the Second Advent He will come again with "all the holy Angels."

"And He shall send His Angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His Elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

To us, as members of the Body of Christ, as partakers of His Human Nature, as His brethren and heirs of salvation,

¹ See "The Angels' Ministry." (Masters, London.)

belongs of right, by His gracious appointment, the same Angelic Ministry.

St. Peter was set free from his bonds and from prison by an Angel, and an Angel stood by St. Paul in the ship, strengthening him and encouraging him.

In the Holy Gospel for the festival our Master tells us of the little ones whom He had blessed—

“ Their Angels do always behold the Face of My Father Which is in Heaven.”

How should the words of Christ, and His unveiling of the children’s unseen Guardians, sanctify child life and children’s innocence in our thoughts and dealings.

They seem to tell us, too, of the frequency of the angelic ministrations to those who are His, though not evident to us, through imperfection of our spiritual vision.

“ And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.”

The horses and chariots of fire were *there* all the time, but the servant of Elisha only *saw* them when his eyes were opened. May it not be so with the Angelic presences round about the members of Jesus Christ, His servants and followers here on earth?

They are there, but our eyes are holden, through sin and infirmity, so that we cannot perceive God’s Messengers, or discern the constant guardianship of His Love.

The dignity of child-life we may call the subject of the Gospel, of which the concluding phrase, to which we have already referred, contains the highest attribute :

"In heaven their Angels do always behold the Face of My Father which is in Heaven."

"Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" was the question propounded by the disciples to our Lord.

"And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not *enter*—in no wise enter—into the kingdom of Heaven."

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of Heaven."

And then the Merciful Saviour pronounces solemn judgment on those who shall cause to stumble the little ones, the weaker souls, which believe in Him. Words they are which may well make us pause and think.

"It must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"

"Take heed," He says in conclusion, "that ye despise not one of these little ones." Weak and obscure they may be, but so precious are they in the sight of God, that round them shines a radiance, to us invisible,—a radiance which springs from the Angel forms which guard them, sent from the immediate Presence Chamber of God, Whose Face they do always behold.

The Epistle tells of the character of the Angels' ministry: they war with the powers of evil in defence of the heirs of salvation.

"Michael and his Angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels; and prevailed not."

It is to warfare that the heir of salvation is pledged at

Baptism, warfare that shall last as long as life itself with Satan and the powers of evil—the Angels of “the great dragon, that old serpent, called the devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world.”

But, by virtue of Holy Baptism there comes to the soul “salvation, and strength, and the power of His Christ.”

And the members of Christ who fight beneath His standard, the Cross, overcome Satan “by the Blood of the Lamb,” through the power of the Precious Blood, “and by the word of their testimony.”

“It has been a constant tradition of Christianity that Angels attend at the ministration of Holy Baptism.” And if with us then, when we are pledged to warfare with the unseen powers of evil, surely we may believe that they follow us, and succour us when the battle rages and the enemy cometh on so fast; even as they ministered to the Captain of our Salvation in His victorious conflict with the same foe.

This is what the Collect refers to when it bids us pray :

“Mercifully grant that as Thy Holy Angels always do Thee service in heaven, so by Thy appointment they may *succour* and *defend* us on earth.”

Note that it is by God’s “appointment,” the proof of His perpetual care and provision for the needs of the children of His Kingdom. His Kingdom in heaven and earth is one; over all He rules, and His Holy Angels, who have never sinned, rejoice in being allowed to aid the fallen children of men, in obedience to His will.

Who shall tell of the joy over our victories, the shame over our defeats, which is experienced by the Angels of God, and by our Guardian Angel in particular, as they

watch over our struggles, and seek to aid us, in ways unknown to us, in the crises of our conflict?

The "everlasting God" has "constituted the *services* of Angels and men in a wonderful order."

"Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the Kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as Head above all."

"Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created."

"Thy Will be done in earth as it is in heaven." What are the characteristics of the Angelic service in heaven, which we pray may be manifested in our service here on earth?

"O praise the Lord, ye Angels of His, ye that excel in strength: ye that fulfil His Commandments and hearken unto the voice of His words."

- (1) A perfect obedience—"fulfilling" His will:
- (2) A constant hearkening to His voice.

These are two points for our self-examination before our communion on the Angels' Festival:

- (1) We pray that God's Will may be done in earth as in heaven: how far, and how readily, do we follow the example of the Holy Angels in our obedience?

Our obedience so often wants testing. It is so forced, so unwilling, so often rendered as a matter of compulsion, and not as the offering of devotion. We obey because we must, not because we have learnt to "love that which Thou dost command."

- (2) How far is ours an attitude of constant listening to the Voice of God? His Voice is ever sounding—"This is the way, walk ye in it;" but other

voices deaden our ears, and other interests occupy our attention ; we cannot hear because we do not love Him Who calls so tenderly. “ O Lord our God, other lords beside Thee have had dominion over us.”

In our worship before the Altar it is our privilege to join in the Angelic worship, and to join in the Angelic song ;

“ Therefore with Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of Heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious Name ; evermore praising Thee, and saying : Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory : Glory be to Thee, O Lord Most High.”

And Angels will gather round the sacred place where the Body of Jesus rests. And Angels will bow their heads in lowly adoration in the Presence of their King.

Unheard by us, Angelic praises will be rising before the Throne ; obedience, perfect in spirit and in readiness, will be the Angels’ offering. Each will be longing to give of the best of his service as of his praise, absorbed in the thought of the glory of the King.

And our praises, our obedience, our readiness, our longing, our service — what shall we dare to say of them ? Absorbed, alas, *we* too often are, even before the Altar, in self, our grievances, our fancies, and our preoccupations.

And yet not for Angels is the blessedness and the awfulness of Communion. That—marvel of all marvels—is reserved for sinful man, man redeemed, man whose nature the Son of God by the Incarnation has taken upon Himself.

“ For verily He took not on Him the nature of Angels ; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham.” And still, “ His delights are with the sons of men.”

In Preparation—

“There is joy in the presence of the Angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”

Let Angels rejoice at the humility of thy penitence as thou dost approach the Throne of the Angels' King.

In Communion—

Pray for grace to guard with angelic faithfulness and devotion the Sacred Body committed to your charge.

“Two Angels in white, the one at the Head, and the other at the Feet, where the Body of Jesus had lain.”

In Thanksgiving—

Say an “Our Father”; asking for grace so to live here, that in death you may be “carried by the Angels into Abraham's Bosom.”

St. Luke the Evangelist

The Collect.—Almighty God, Who calledst Luke the Physician, whose praise is in the Gospel, to be an Evangelist and Physician of the soul; May it please Thee that by the wholesome medicines of the doctrine delivered by him, all the diseases of our souls may be healed; through the merits of Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—2 Tim. iv. 5. *The Gospel.*—St. Luke x. 1.

How constantly these Collects remind us of the call of God to different people, of whom so very little is recorded, to various spheres of duty in the harvest field of His Church.

St. Luke is referred to by St. Paul as “the beloved physician,” and we know that he was the companion of St. Paul in several of his Missionary journeys.

How fortunate, we are apt to say, that the two men met; that St. Paul should have met with a man of medical training, likely to be of such use to him in his journeys, a man of literary and artistic tastes, capable of recording the scenes through which he passed.

That is the modern and ordinary point of view. The Church says—

“ Almighty God, Who *calledst* Luke the Physician, to be an Evangelist and Physician of the soul.”

God Who watches over the Church and knows its every

need, as well as the characteristics and endowments of every man, called St. Luke to fulfil the purpose for which he was needed, and for which he was adapted.

Of the method of the call we are ignorant. It is probable he was one of St. Paul's converts, though tradition asserts that he was one of the Seventy sent forth by our Lord. And this would appear to be the reason why the commission of the Seventy, as related by St. Luke himself, forms the Gospel for the day.

The dedication of his Gospel, however, would seem to exclude him from the number of those who had been eye-witnesses of our Lord's life of ministry.

We have dwelt upon the thought of vocation on a previous festival, but it is well to notice how it is impressed upon us in preparation for our Communion on the festivals of the Saints.

Our lives may seem ordinary, obscure, with little or no opportunity for doing any direct work for the Master. We may be men or women with literary, scientific, artistic tastes which engross our time or form our means of livelihood.

1. Wherever we are, whatever our life be, so long as we are in the way of duty and are discharging its claims, that is for us the place and the life in which God is to be glorified.

God has called us to that life, and has endued us with powers and capabilities which are to be trained and used to the utmost as the gifts of His goodness.

2. But to us thus equipped and trained there may come a distinct, however unexpected, call from God. He has need of us, impossible as it may seem to us, conscious as we are of our obscurity and incapacity.

The call may, frequently does, come when we are in special communion with our Lord, kneeling before His Altar, receiving His priceless Gifts.

We can hardly believe it is real, and yet we hear the words whispered to our soul—"I have need of thee."

Blessed is that soul which has the grace to reply, "Here am I, send me."

Then we see all the secret guiding of Eternal Love; we realise why we were led to these habits, that study, and to thoroughness in our efforts after the fulfilment of duty.

It is not we who "feel inclined to take up some work for God": it is God Who calls us to that work, for which all the time He has been gradually and silently preparing us.

The surrender, like the call, is the result of the workings of God's grace.

Note the peculiar character of the work to which St. Luke was called,—"to be an Evangelist and Physician of the soul." He was not merely to record, but as formerly he had ministered to the bodies, so now he was to minister to the souls of men.

Following on this thought we pray that "by the wholesome medicines of the doctrine delivered by him, all the diseases of our souls may be healed."

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

The Holy Gospels contain the record, not only of the merciful and loving words of Christ our Lord, but also His words of severity, of warning, and of judgment. "The wholesome medicine" of the latter is not to be overlooked.

He who ministers to the soul diseased must be guided by the Holy Spirit in his diagnosis of its malady, and for his treatment of its ailments must possess a full knowledge of the remedies which the Great Physician, Whose representative he is, has provided.

What a life of constant communion, of prayer, and reliance on the Holy Ghost, is required of those who are called to the intense responsibility of being physicians of the soul. What humility, what penitence, what love for Christ and the souls for whom He died, are needed.

“All the diseases of our souls.” Some we know, of others we are ignorant. Christ knows them all, and all He desires to heal.

Self-examination duly conducted in preparation for our Communion is the means whereby the Holy Spirit reveals to us our soul-sickness. Confession is the means whereby the great Physician heals our wounds, and cleanses the soul of sin, while His earthly representative prescribes the remedies and is the agent of our cure.

“Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath left power to His Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in Him, of His great mercy forgive thee thine offences; And by His authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins.”

Times of Retreat are special opportunities for examination into the diseases of our soul. Self-examination is apt to become perfunctory and partial; we look so regularly for the symptoms to which we are accustomed that others of insidious growth, but fatal tendency, escape our notice.

A Retreat, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in the constant Presence of our Lord, under the conduct of a wise physician of the soul, reveals the existence of ail-

ments little suspected, and gives us the opportunity for their eradication.

In the Epistle St. Luke is only once mentioned by St. Paul, but the reference is full of touching significance—"only Luke is with me."

God in calling St. Luke had chosen him to be the companion of the labours of the Great Apostle to the Gentiles, and as his companion he had shared in that conflict which St. Paul describes—

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith"—a magnificent record.

The life had been one of sacrifice and would be so to the end—"I am ready to be offered." It had been one of suffering and of poverty, as our Lord in the Gospel foretells—"I send you forth as lambs among wolves. Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes."

Above all, it had been a life of many disappointments, from the failures of those in whom the Apostle had expected a constancy and faith equal to his own. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world."

No wonder then that the steadfastness of St. Luke should have won his notice and commendation. "Only Luke is with me": Luke the "fellow-labourer," "the beloved physician," "the brother, whose praise is in the Gospel throughout all the Churches."

See what are the characteristics of the called by God, whatever their sphere may be.

- (a) Self-sacrifice :
- (b) Conflict :
- (c) Constancy in the faith :

- (d) Steadfast devotion :
- (e) Poverty and obscurity.

Are these things expected of all whom God calls? In one form or another, Yes.

Christ's conditions do not change. "Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."

But look, as St. Paul did, to the end. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

To love and to long for His appearing *then*, we must love and long for His appearing now, as He comes to us veiled in the mysteries of the Holy Eucharist. Each approach to His Altar is a preparation for our final meeting with our Lord.

Each approach is a preparation, and each preparation is to mark a more worthy approach. Life moves slowly, but moves ever onward; and so our religious life must be marked by progress, slow it may be, but steady and regular. "They shall go from strength to strength."

Each Communion must bear witness to progressive effort, effort to attain some measure of increased devotion, increasing likeness to our Lord.

In the Holy Eucharist He seems to move silently before us, exhibiting to us the Divine Pattern which, by His discipline and our effort, is to be worked out in the lives of those whom He has called to follow Him.

There is the all-perfect Sacrifice; there are the marks of His conflict endured for us; there is unshaken, unchanging

constancy ; there is His devotion to the Will of His Father and the service of us His brethren ; there is His humble, hidden Life in the Sacrament.

Is it too much to ask of us, that we shall manifest such qualities ? It would be, if it were not for the Life and Love of Jesus our Lord. Without His presence who could be sufficient for these things ?

We wonder so often that our Communions seem to do us so little good, and we are almost inclined to lay the blame on Him. Does it not really rest on our lack of preparation ?

We come to the Sacrifice of the Altar, and He, the Lamb of God, is willing to communicate to us the grace of sacrifice. But He finds in us unreadiness to surrender our will, a lack of determination, an irresolution of purpose. Can He do mighty works in a soul thus unprepared ?

He comes to us with the marks of His Passion shining gloriously upon His Sacred Body. And we, what do we know of real conflict for His sake, against self, the world, and the devil ?

He comes to us in humblest, lowliest form, hidden beneath the veils of the Sacrament ; and, alas, He finds us full of pride, pride even in our own imaginary spiritual attainments. Can He find a resting-place in a heart full of worldly ambition, consumed with vanity and craving for advancement ?

No, the blame for our want of progress rests not upon Him, but upon ourselves, who are so slothful in meditation upon the marvels of the Divine Example, so backward in the work of preparation, and in correspondence to His grace.

The great Physician, with all-perfect knowledge, meets us in the Holy Eucharist, able to save, able to heal, knowing

each disease of each sin-laden soul, and willing to cure, if only we be willing to accept His discipline.

Try to picture to yourself the sorrow of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, if you repel His willingness, and choose to deepen the malady of your soul which He discerns, and from which, in the constancy of His Love, He yearns to set you free.

In Preparation—

So use self-examination in the power of the Holy Spirit that you may—

- (i.) Behold the diseases from which your soul suffers ;
- (ii.) Obtain healing through the Precious Blood of the Great Physician.

In Communion—

In union with the Divine Sacrifice “present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

In Thanksgiving—

“Here am I ; for Thou didst call me.”

“Speak, Lord ; for Thy servant heareth.”

St. Simon and St. Jude, Apostles

The Collect.—O Almighty God, Who hast built Thy Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the head corner-stone : Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their doctrine, that we may be made an holy temple acceptable unto Thee ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—St. Jude i. *The Gospel.*—St. John xv. 17.

Unity in the Body of Christ, the Holy Catholic Church ; unity of spirit, the consequence of unity of doctrine, would seem to be a prominent thought in to-day's festival.

We commemorate two Apostles ; but they are one, by virtue of their call, of their admission into the fellowship of Christ, of their faith in His revelation.

They were admitted to great and glorious privileges, for they were made, the Collect says, foundation-stones of that Church which God Himself has built—and is still building — Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son, “being the Head Corner-Stone.”

“Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

It will be well to quote the whole passage upon which this Collect is based, and which describes the position of those who have been admitted into the fellowship of that Holy Church, “whose Builder and Maker is God.”

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the household of God ;

“And are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Corner-Stone ;

“In Whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy Temple in the Lord ;

“In Whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

The reference in this passage, and consequently in the Collect, is clearly to the building of Solomon’s Temple, as described in 1 Kings, chaps. v. and vi.

“And the King commanded and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house.”

“And Solomon’s builders and Hiram’s builders”—working with a unity of purpose—“did hew them, and the stone-squarers : so they prepared timber and stones to build the house.”

“And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither : so that there was neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.”

“Which things are an allegory,” a wondrous depicting of the building of that House of God, the Heavenly Temple, which is the Church of the Living God.

“On the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets.” “The King commanded and they brought great stones, costly stones”—were they not redeemed by the Precious Blood of Christ?—“hewed stones”—

Many a blow and biting sculpture
Polished well those stones elect,

“to lay the foundation of the house.”

H.D.

T

And on those foundation-stones were built up the stones and timber hewn and prepared by the servants of Solomon.

Even so the servants of the Great King—our Solomon, the Prince of Wisdom and of Peace—accomplish their work upon those who are to be fitted into the walls of the heavenly fabric. Much “hewing” is often needed, the cutting away of the faulty and the worthless, the shaping of the natural material into the divine pattern.

“And the house”—the perfected house—“was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither.” The work is done here, in the Church on earth, where the work of preparation, of making ready, is done before the individual stone can be finally built into its allotted place in the still rising Temple of God.

Silently, “without noise of ax or hammer,” that Temple rises ; stone after stone is fitted in, when God sees it is ready. All are knit together in the unity of that House ; all are built upon the same foundation ; Christ is the Chief Corner-Stone, binding all in one.

It is essential that we should study the allegory, if we would understand the full meaning of the Collect.

“Grant us to be joined together in unity of Spirit by their doctrine, that we may be made an holy temple acceptable unto Thee.”

Unity of spirit is consequent upon unity of faith. Faith is the foundation of unity. Faith in what ? In Apostolic doctrine.

And what is Apostolic doctrine ? Briefly, the doctrines of the Apostles’ Creed : the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation, the Resurrection and Ascension, the Holy Church and the Sacraments, the Communion of Saints, and the Life Everlasting.

And yet men say, "So long as a man leads a blameless life it does not matter what he believes."

The divisions in the Church are the bane of the Church. High, Low, Broad ; Society against Society ; where is the unity of spirit ? There is none, because "every one of you hath a doctrine, hath an interpretation :" there is no remembrance of the need of the unity of faith.

Nowhere is the Faith more definitely insisted upon than in the one chapter which forms the testimony of St. Jude, his legacy to the Catholic Church.

"It was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once"—“once for all” (R.V.)—“delivered to the Saints.”

Contrast the teaching of an Apostle with the “undenominational religion” which professing Churchmen are too often willing to accept.

Note the severity of the Apostle towards those who “deny the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ,” and his reference to those who, having been once saved out of the land of Egypt were afterwards destroyed, not because of what they did, but because they “believed not.”

Christ has placed the Church, which is His Body, under the rule and guidance of the Holy Ghost : of the Holy Ghost He said, “He shall guide you into all truth ;” and of His Church an Apostle consequently speaks as “the pillar and ground of the truth.”

Of St. Simon we have no notice in Scripture beyond the fact that he was surnamed in Hebrew “the Canaanite,” or,

in Greek, "Zelotes." Both words signify a zealot, but in what sense is not apparent, unless the application is given him because he was one of a strict sect of Pharisees.

"St. Jude, Judas, Thaddæus, or Lebbæus, calls himself 'the brother of James,' apparently to distinguish himself from Judas Iscariot, and it is probably for the same reason that these other names are put prominently forward, as on one occasion when his name Judas is used, a parenthesis is added, 'not Iscariot.' "¹

United in the faith and in their life of ministry and suffering, it is believed that the two Apostles were united also in their martyrdom—probably in Persia.

The Gospel contains the new commandment given by our Lord to His Apostles—"that ye love one another," showing the value which He Who is Love placed upon "unity of spirit."

Mark our Lord's training of His Apostles for their future life of witness.

(i.) It is He Who has chosen them out of the world, and because the world had hated Him, the world would hate them also who were His servants and representatives.

(ii.) He instructs them in doctrine :

(a) The unity of the Father and the Son in the Godhead.

"They have both seen and hated both Me and My Father."

Compare, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

¹ Blunt's "Annotated Book of Common Prayer."

(b) The unity of the Blessed Trinity, and the future work of God the Holy Ghost in the Church.

"When the Comforter is come, Whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth Which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me."

"And ye also shall bear witness :" the Holy Ghost was to bear witness, and they in union with, and in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, were to be privileged to bear witness also.

Their witness, their lives, faithful unto death, are our precious heritage. We have the same faith—once for all committed to the Saints ; we have been "sanctified by God the Father, preserved in Jesus Christ, and called ;" we have the same Holy Spirit, leading us into the truth, bearing witness in our hearts, comforting us when the world hates us, and all seems conspiring against our peace.

We have, above all, through the power of the same Spirit, the Presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist ; and to us, as we draw near to that Presence, mercy and peace and love are multiplied.

How blessed it is in the midst of the world's tumult and cares, in the midst of controversial strife, and the din of warring parties within the Church, to come into the Divine Presence in the confidence of the One Faith ; there "to be joined together in unity of Spirit" with Christ the Chief Corner-Stone, with His Saints and Apostles and the whole company of those who have lived and suffered and died in the Holy Catholic Faith.

Weakness becomes strength, as faith reveals that won-

drous unity. The Creed becomes our song of triumph, and we bow our heads in adoration as we say—

“Thou only art the Lord; Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art Most High in the Glory of God the Father.”

In Preparation—

Consider (a) The dignity,

(b) The privilege,

(c) The responsibility, of belonging to the Church of God, built upon the foundations of the Apostles and Prophets, of which Jesus Christ Himself is the Head Corner-Stone.

In Communion—

Hear the voice of Jesus saying,

“These things I command you, that ye love one another. As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”

In Thanksgiving—

Pray for true zeal, earnestly to contend for the faith once for all delivered to the Saints.

All Saints' Day

The Collect.—O Almighty God, Who hast knit together Thine elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of Thy Son Christ our Lord ; Grant us grace so to follow Thy blessed Saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys, which Thou hast prepared for them that unfeignedly love Thee ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Epistle.—Rev. vii. 2. *The Gospel.*—St. Matt. v. 1.

“ Rejoice we all in the Lord while we celebrate this day the honour of all the Saints : for in them the Angels have joy and give glory to the Son of God.”

The words are those of the Introit for the festival of All Saints, the “ Natale Omnia Sanctorum,” and evince a wonderful insight into the mysteries of the mystical body of Christ our Lord and its unity.

The Church on earth rejoices in the Lord while it celebrates the memory of all the Saints, who, having finished their work on earth, have entered into His rest.

They are *our* Saints, part of the same household, members of the same family, who have fought our fight, borne our burdens, and who now help us, in our feeble following, not merely by the power of example, but by the efficacy of their prayers.

In honouring them we honour the Lord Who called them to be Saints, upheld them by His Almighty grace in their

endeavours to live the saintly life, and Who, in them, triumphed gloriously.

More than that: the Angels round the Throne, the ministers to the heirs of salvation, rejoice with us; they have joy in the redeeming, sanctifying work of the Angels' King, and for His triumphs in His Saints they give glory to the Son of God.

It is to this unity in the Kingdom of Christ that the Collect refers. "Almighty God, Who hast knit together Thine elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical Body of Thy Son Jesus Christ."

"One family, we dwell in Him,
One Church, above, beneath ;
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death."

How such a thought, and such a festival, take away from the sense of solitariness, of lonely isolation, in which so many seem to stand.

"It is so hard to persevere when one has so few helps, and is alone in endeavouring to uphold the Faith; and to live in accordance with what one has been taught."

True, it does often seem hard, well-nigh impossible; but even as the eyes of the servant, when opened, beheld "the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha," so the eye of faith, trained by prayer and meditation, is able to behold the wonders of the mystical Body of Christ, the unity of that Body which knows no earthly limits; and the ear can catch the sound, as of many waters, of the prayers and praises of the Saints of God, with whom we are linked in unseen union.

Our weak efforts are strengthened by that union: our

feeble prayers receive a new vitality, and our praises acquire a new life and reality.

“Grant us grace so to follow Thy blessed Saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys, which Thou hast prepared for those that unfeignedly love Thee.”

Two petitions, one consequent upon the other.

(i.) For grace to follow the saintly life :

(ii.) That, through following, we may attain to the blessedness of the Saints.

(i.) To follow we must have grace, and grace flows from the Sacred Body, and is bestowed upon us through the Sacraments.

The following is to be “in all virtuous and godly living.” Religion is a life : the whole life is to be sanctified and given to God. How? Through union with the Divine Life of Him Who is the Source of both grace and virtue.

(ii.) What are the consequences of such a life? The “unspeakable joys,” which God has prepared :

(a) The joy of perfect penitence ;

(b) The joy of perfect obedience ;

(c) The joy of perfect union ;

(d) The joy of the Vision of the Face of Jesus.

Joys, begun, tasted in measure now ; to be fulfilled hereafter.

For whom are such joys prepared? For those who “unfeignedly love.” It is the characteristic of the Saints—to love, to love God, to love Jesus, to love God the Holy Ghost.

“They were grounded in true humility, lived in simple obedience, walked in love and patience.”

It was not the great deeds which they accomplished which made them saints, but the love which penetrated their being and sanctified each action, however trivial.

And who are they whom we are to follow, and whom we commemorate on the great Festival of All Saints ?

We have special days for special Apostles, Saints, and Martyrs, but to-day we exhibit, in honour of our King, the whole casket of His jewels. We look not on the single stones of His Crown, but on the radiant glory which shines from the thickly clustered gems. Each in itself is precious; we stand amazed at the priceless store of the King's treasure-house.

The portion of the Revelation of St. John appointed for the Epistle lifts us up from earth to the pure Vision of God and of His Dwelling-place.

We see the Angel with the seal of the Living God where-with he seals the servants of God in their foreheads.

The mystical number of the chosen people, the roll of the 144,000 from the tribes of Israel, is called in our hearing ; the foreshadowing of the perfected number of the Saints.

“After this”—we must quote in full the grand, rhythmic words of the Apostle—“I beheld, and lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the Throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.”

Note the Catholicity of the Church—“all nations, and people, and tongues.” Note the emblems of the Saints—“white robes, and palms in their hands.”

“These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb.”

The palms are the tokens of victory won through the power of the Precious Blood, and through the strength of the King of Saints ; “In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.”

No wonder that they cry "with ■ loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God Which sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb."

"And all the Angels stood round about the Throne," as the Introit reminded us, "and fell before the Throne on their faces, and worshipped God," glorifying Him and having joy in the triumph of His Saints.

Pray that your worship of the Lamb in the Holy Eucharist, may reflect in some measure the worship which rises from the Saints of God, and of the angelic host before the Throne. Strive as you kneel to catch the echoes of the worship of Heaven.

In the Holy Gospel, our Lord Himself, the Eternal Wisdom, teaches us

I. The spiritual characteristics, the inner life, of the blessed Saints.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit;" "the meek;" "those who hunger and thirst after righteousness;" "the merciful;" "the pure in heart;" "the peacemakers."

II. The contradictions of the saintly life.

"Blessed are they that mourn;" "they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake;" they who are reviled and calumniated of men for the sake of Christ.

How great is the contradiction to our view of suffering; we must stand very near the Cross to be able to enter into the Mind of Christ.

"Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in Heaven."

The joy of the Saints in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings now is the prelude to the eternal joy of union with Him hereafter.

"Grant us so to follow Thy blessed Saints," so to resemble them in the characteristics of their inner life, so to share, and so to view, the discipline of their lives, that we, too, may be among the number of the "blessed," and may attain to the joys unspeakable.

But how shall we, whom the list of saintly qualities condemns as we read it, how shall we hope to attain?

Poor in spirit—and I am proud.

Meek—and I am hasty and passionate.

Merciful—and I am unforgiving.

Peacemakers—and I am quarrelsome.

Pure in heart—and I, alas, I know that my "heart is not right in the sight of God."

Sorrow, pain, affliction—I cannot bear the thought of them.

Opposition, misrepresentation—I rebel against them. I meet scorn with scorn, ill-will with ill-will.

And the Master says, "*Blessed* are they which are persecuted," "*Rejoice and be exceeding glad,*" when such things befall you.

Alas, where are the tokens of saintliness in me? What hope have I of the joys unspeakable?

"Jesus, seeing the multitudes, went up into a mountain; and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him."

"*Came unto Him,*" therein is the possibility; if only we come to Him, the King of Saints, Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, will unfold to us the secrets of the way of blessedness, and will convey to us from His Own Life, the grace wherewith we may hope to follow.

He has gone up into the Mount of God, and there as He sits upon the Throne of His righteousness, He comprehends the multitudinous needs of His brethren here on

earth, who are drawn by the attraction of His Love into the Sacred Presence ; "and whosoever cometh shall not be cast out."

In Him, our King, dwells all the fulness of the saintly life. We know His humility, for He condescends to ask us to sit down at His Table ; we know that He is merciful, for has He not had mercy upon us ? We know that He has made peace for us, we know the pureness of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and His hunger and thirst to do His Father's Will.

We know how He suffered pain, anguish of soul—have we never caused Him suffering ? We know how He was persecuted, reviled, and scorned of men. We know how He even rejoiced in what He endured, because thereby He was fulfilling the purpose of His Father.

And He, the Pattern of Saints, and the Man of Sorrows, the Fount of the Saintly life, and the despised One of Nazareth and Calvary, meets us in the Holy Eucharist, pleading with us to be among the number of the blessed, to come to Him with an absolute surrender, that we may be moulded into likeness to Himself.

It is a supreme opportunity. In union with the All-perfect Sacrifice, we can offer the sacrifice of ourselves, our souls, and bodies ; by such sacrifice only can we attain to true blessedness.

It is the last Festival in the Church's year. Jesus calls us from the Altar. The voice of all the Saints of God, like the sound of many waters, echoes in our ears—"Come." "Follow."

You must come, you must follow now, if one day you would hear the gracious Voice say to you, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

In *Preparation*—

“I will acknowledge my sin unto Thee: and mine unrighteousness have I not hid.

“I said, I will confess my sins unto the Lord: and so Thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin.”

Remember, the saintly life must be built on the foundation of a true repentance.

In *Communion*—

“The Lamb Which is in the midst of the Throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters.”

In *Thanksgiving*—

“Let us then take courage, let us go forward together; Jesus will be with us.

“For the sake of Jesus we have undertaken the Cross; for the sake of Jesus let us persevere in the Cross.

“Behold, our King entereth in before us, and He will fight for us.

“Let us follow manfully, let no man fear any terrors; let us be prepared to die valiantly in battle, nor to bring such disgrace on our glory as to flee from the Cross.”¹

¹ Thomas à Kempis.

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